

JOHN BELL HOOD'S DIVISION IN THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA:
A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.

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Military History

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ABSTRACT

JOHN BELL HOOD'S DIVISION IN THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, by Major Kyle J. Foley, 102 pages.

This thesis is a historical analysis and assessment of Major General John Bell Hood's Division during the Battle of Chickamauga. In early July 1863, the Confederate Army suffered two major defeats, Vicksburg and Gettysburg, where the division suffered many casualties, including Hood. Hood's Division earned a reputation as the best division in the Army of Northern Virginia. This division was selected to reinforce General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee, and his campaign to defeat the Federal Army of the Cumberland, under the command of Major General William Rosecrans. Their reputation preceded them with high expectations. Chickamauga was the division's first major battle in the western theater.

The thesis begins with brief pre-Chickamauga biographies of Hood and his brigade commanders; Brigadier General Evander McIver Law, Brigadier General Henry L. Benning, and Brigadier General Jerome B. Robertson. Next, the circumstances that brought the division to the Battle of Chickamauga and their journey to northern Georgia will be discussed. Thereafter, a close examination of the engagements conducted from 18-20 September 1863 will be discussed. Finally, an analysis will be presented to how the leaders of Hood's Division performed during the Battle of Chickamauga, and draws conclusions as to the proximate causes of their performances. These causes focus on the divisional leaders and their decisions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vi
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION	1
1. LEADER'S OF HOOD'S DIVISION.....	7
2. JOURNEY WESTWARD	23
3. BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA: EVENTS OF 18 – 19 SEPTEMBER 1863	34
4. BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA: 20 SEPTEMBER 1863.....	63
5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	94
CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT.....	95

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Routes for Journey to Ringgold.....	29
2. Bushrod Johnson's Movements, 18 September 1863.....	38
3. Advance of Hood's Column, 18 September 1863.....	40
4. General Situation, 19 September 0700.....	43
5. Array of Hood's Division, 1400, 19 September 1863.....	45
6. Hood's Division begins the assault.....	47
7. Texas Brigade changes front.....	49
8. Viniard Field, 1600, 19 September 1863.....	52
9. General Situation, 1630, 19 September 1863.....	55
10. Array of Hood's Division, 1100, 20 September 1863.....	64
11. The Break Through, 1110-1130, 20 September 1863.....	66
12. Hood's Division, 1300, 20 September 1863.....	71
13. Hood's Division, 1330, 20 September 1863.....	77

INTRODUCTION

Often it serves to reflect on history to find directions for the future.¹

John O. Marsh, Jr.
former Secretary of the Army

Field Manual 22-100 identifies two reasons why leadership is important to our leaders today: to win the wars for our nation and for the soldiers who deserve nothing less.² To become a competent military leader today, a person must possess self-confidence in his or her abilities to lead soldiers into conflicts and win our nation's wars. They must strive to gain a thorough knowledge of their profession, through academics and personal experiences, to build a level of competency in their abilities to lead. Competence is not inherited. It is achieved through the dedicated study of a profession. Understanding the basic values, attributes, skills and doctrine of a profession is the foundation of good leadership. A continuous study of the basic fundamentals in the art and science of military history is most beneficial to military professionals today. Military history studies provide insights and reasons for successes and failures of past conflicts. They provide superb lessons for what went right, what went wrong, and what was done to correct the problem or sustain the success.

Professional military leaders must consolidate all they have learned, experienced and studied. They must formulate basic principles and processes that allow them to efficiently manage any assigned task or mission. Yet, it is through a mastery of analyzing the art and science of the problem that successful leadership is achieved.³

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the performance of John Bell Hood's divisional leaders during the Battle of Chickamauga, and provide beneficial insight into the leadership qualities and tactical considerations essential in combat that remain constant throughout history and today.

Background

It was late August 1863. Confederate armies had just suffered from two major defeats in the previous month. The campaign of General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, failed in Pennsylvania, culminating in defeat at Gettysburg on 3 July and repulsed south beyond the Potomac River.⁴ Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton's Confederate forces in the Department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana and the river port at Vicksburg had succumbed to Major General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of Federal forces in the Department of West Tennessee, the very next day.

The President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, knew that a change in strategy was needed. Union successes had lowered Confederate morale, cost thousands of Confederate lives, and relinquished vital territory in central and western Tennessee. Control of the railroad hub near Chattanooga was key to success in the west, for without it, the Confederacy would be split, losing the ability to maintain lines of communications and hold off the impending advance of Union troops through the heart of the South.⁵

The decision to send Confederate reinforcements to the Army of Tennessee was late in coming. Davis debated with his senior military advisors over the proposal for two weeks. Most of his focus, to this point of the Civil War, had been on the eastern theater of operations centered on Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. However, after the defeat at

Gettysburg, President Davis began to shift his focus to the western theater and the Army of Tennessee. To achieve his ultimate goal, Confederate independence, Davis needed to get the Union to focus efforts and resources away from the eastern theater and prevent the Federal forces from threatening Atlanta and severing his lines of communication to Richmond, the Confederate capital. Davis' advisors believed that by sending reinforcements to the Army of Tennessee, the Confederates could strike a swift, crushing blow upon Union forces, relieve that theater of the enemy, and quickly return the reinforcements to Virginia without endangering the Confederate capital.⁶ Additionally, the proposal provided Davis the precious time he needed to salvage and restore what remained of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, temporarily weakened, and preserve the Confederate lines of communication through Atlanta to Richmond.

The Confederate Army of Tennessee was nearly intact, but considerably outnumbered as compared to the Union's Army of the Cumberland strength on 21 August 1863. The Army of the Cumberland, under the command of Major General William Rosecrans, numbered nearly 80,000 men. The Army of Tennessee, under the command of General Braxton Bragg numbered approximately 44,000 Confederates.⁷ If President Davis could reinforce the Army of Tennessee to an equal or greater force than that of the Union forces, perhaps the Confederates could regain the initiative. On 6 September, General Lee signed the orders dispatching Lieutenant General James Longstreet's First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia to reinforce the Army of Tennessee, and that evening, ordered the Quartermaster General to prepare the transportation for the movement.⁸

Lieutenant General James Longstreet's First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia was recuperating from the battles at Gettysburg near the Rapidan River, north of Fredericksburg, Virginia. However, the rest was short, and on 9 September, the first train came to Orange Courthouse to transport the first load of troops from the divisions of Major General John Bell Hood and Major General Lafayette McLaws, both of Longstreet's First Corps.⁹

This thesis focuses on Major General John Bell Hood's division and its leaders' performance during the Battle of Chickamauga. Specifically, did Hood's Division perform significantly better than other divisions in the Army of Tennessee?

Primary sources are available for most of Hood's subordinate division commanders. Limited primary source information could be found on Brigadier General Evander McIver Law, who became one of Hood's subordinate brigade commanders. Several primary sources of Major General Hood's official records, battlefield notes, orders, and diaries do not exist. One exception, a book of his memoirs, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies*, was written nearly fifteen years after the battle and published a year after his death. Hood's book, written mainly as a defense of himself, is biased, and sometimes inaccurate when compared to the other primary sources. However, it contains some valuable research material. Hood wrote the book mainly out of need, to provide for his large family including his wife and eleven children. Additionally, letters and diaries of the soldiers who fought for Hood are available.

Many secondary sources on Hood's Division provide sufficient details about their engagements. Of particular interest are the books by Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga:*

Bloody Battle in the West, Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: Lee's Grenadier Guard*, J. Gary Laine with Morris M. Penny, *Law's Alabama Brigade in the War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, Dave Dameron, *Benning's Brigade, Volume I, A History and Roster of the Fifteenth Georgia*, and Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence*, provide excellent material from which information can be derived. Most other sources describe or analyze the battle as a whole, but only moderately detailed accounts exist.

The thesis will be presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 will present a brief biographical depiction of John Bell Hood. It will next transition its focus to Hood's subordinate commanders during the Battle of Chickamauga: Brigadier General Evander McIver Law, who commanded Hood's division during the battle, Brigadier General Jerome B. Robertson, and Brigadier General Henry L. Benning. I will provide a brief synopsis of each general's background and battlefield experiences. Chapter 2 will define the circumstances that brought the division to the Battle of Chickamauga and describe the events of their journey to northern Georgia. Chapter 3 examines the conflicts of 18 and 19 September, and set the conditions of the battlefield as they were established on the morning of 20 September 1863. Chapter 4 will provide a close examination of the engagements that occurred on 20 September. Chapter 5 will complete the thesis, and present an in-depth analysis of the performance of Hood's Division. A summation of the division's successes and failures during the battle will also be presented. A series of conclusions will be provided, supporting sufficient answers to the primary research question and subordinate questions. Why was Hood's division so successful? Was it his leadership? Was it the leadership abilities of his subordinate commanders? Was the

performance of his brigades instrumental to the Confederate victory at Chickamauga?

Most importantly, what are the significant lessons we can learn today from the performance of the leadership within Hood's Division?

¹U.S. Army FM 1, *The Army* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, June 2001), 2.

²U.S. Army FM 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, August 1999), 1-1.

³Charles E. Heller and William A. Stoft, *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), xii.

⁴Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West*, (Dayton, OH: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1961), 85.

⁵James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 1896), 433.

⁶Gilbert Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer*, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 184.

⁷Dr. W. G. Robertson and others, *Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Chickamauga, 18-20 September 1863*. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Command and General Staff College, 1992), 11.

⁸*War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series I, Vol 29, Part II*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 700-701. (Hereafter referred to as O.R.)

⁹Longstreet, 436.

CHAPTER 1

LEADERS OF HOOD'S DIVISION

John Bell Hood, Major General, Commander of Hood's Division

John Bell Hood was born in Kentucky, 29 June 1831, and graduated at nearly the bottom of his class at West Point in 1853. He served as a First Lieutenant in the United States Army in California and Texas until the spring of 1861. When Texas succeeded from the Union, Hood felt obligated to resign his commission in the U.S. Army and sought an opportunity to fight for the Confederacy, in which he was appointed to the equivalent rank. Hood soon enjoyed the rapid rise to higher ranks in the Army of Northern Virginia, where by March of 1862, he obtained the rank of major general and command of a division. The general events leading to his division's involvement at Chickamauga provide interesting research opportunities.

In May of 1861, Hood received from Confederate Headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama, a commission as a lieutenant in the Confederate Army, and was ordered to report to Major General Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Virginia. Hood was promptly assigned to train cavalry companies under Colonel J. B. Magruder at Yorktown, Virginia. Within three months, Hood received promotions to captain, major, and then lieutenant colonel. In the summer of 1861 he was promoted to full colonel, and given command of the Fourth Texas Regiment. On 7 March 1862, Hood was promoted to brigadier general and placed in command of the Texas Brigade in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. As one of Lee's most effective and respected brigadier generals, Hood commanded the legendary Texas Brigade in the Seven Days Battles, Second Manassas, and Antietam. In

October 1862, following the Battle of Antietam, Hood was promoted to Major General at the recommendation of General Lee and given command of a division.

It was not until Gettysburg that Hood got his first opportunity to command troops in battle as a division commander. Unfortunately, he was severely wounded as his division assaulted the fortified positions surrounding the Round Tops. A shell exploded above him, and fragments ranged through his left hand, forearm, elbow, and bicep.¹ Although his arm was not amputated, it was useless to him for the remainder of his life. His first opportunity to command a division evaded him.

Hood was an officer who had distinguished himself well to this point in the Civil War. He was a man who was deeply instilled with the principles of obedience and allegiance. Rarely did he question the orders of his superior officers, especially Lieutenant General James Longstreet, his corps commander. Hood was not a man of intellect. His battle plans were usually simple and predictable. However, of most importance was that he was effective, taking an aggressive approach to executing battle and leading his men to victory, except Gettysburg. Gettysburg disappointed him. Though Hood's loyalty and devotion to the Confederacy never diminished, his injury had kept him from the battle.

Prior to Chickamauga, Hood fought most of his battles with the Army of Northern Virginia, under the direction of Longstreet. He experienced repeated successes during his service in the Army of Northern Virginia. Hood had a reputation as a tenacious fighter. His audacity in battle was demonstrated in the Peninsular Campaign and at Second Manassas. He distinguished himself as he led his troops to victories at Gaines' Mill and Sharpsburg (Antietam).² Though severely wounded at Chickamauga, resulting

in the amputation of his right leg, Hood was later promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General for his distinguished conduct and ability in the Battle of Chickamauga.³

On 9 September 1863, Hood was convalescing in Richmond, Virginia from the wounds he suffered at Gettysburg. He was depressed. Still in pain, Hood's physical and mental abilities began to decline. He had lost the use of his left arm. Another part of the problem was the laudanum (opium derivative dissolved in alcohol) his doctors gave him for the pain, was affecting his ability to think clearly. When Hood heard that elements of his former division were located at the Richmond rail terminal awaiting the next train to take them to the western theater of operations, he made his way to the terminal to greet them. During his visit at the terminal, he conversed with a few of his former officers who urged Hood to join them on their movement.⁴ Motivated by his subordinates' expressive desire for him to join them, Hood's depression subsided and without hesitation, he immediately loaded his favorite horse, Jeff Davis, and joined his men on their journey to the western theater.⁵ This begins the involvement of Major General John Bell Hood and his division in the Battle of Chickamauga.

Three of Hood's brigade commanders accompanied him to Chickamauga. They were: Brigadier General Evander McIver Law, commander of Law's Brigade of five Alabama Regiments; Brigadier General Henry Lewis Benning, commander of Benning's Brigade of four Georgia Regiments; and Brigadier General Jerome Bonaparte Robertson, commander of Robertson's Brigade of one Arkansas Regiment and three Texas Regiments.

Evander McIver Law, Brigadier General, Commander of Law's Brigade

Evander M. Law was born in Darlington, South Carolina, 7 August 1836. He was the first son of Ezekiel A. Law, a Judge and member of the South Carolina legislature, and Sarah Elizabeth McIver.⁶ Law has been described by many sources as a rather handsome man with blue eyes, lean physique, a jet-black beard, and very elegant appearance. To use the phrase of the time, he had a military bearing. He stood 5 feet, 8 1/2 inches in height. His Alabamians fondly referred to their beloved commander as the "little gamecock." He studied in public school, the Arsenal Academy at Columbia, and attended the South Carolina Military Academy (SCMA), today known as the Citadel, graduating in 1856. At SCMA, whose curriculum was similar to that of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, Law studied literature, constitutional law, and public speaking, graduating 4th in his class.⁷ He served as a history teacher at Kings Mountain Military Academy under two former schoolmates, Micah Jenkins and Asbury Coward, until 1860 when he moved to Tuskegee, Alabama, and became cofounder of a military high school there. Prior to the war he was an educator and military instructor by profession.

When Alabama seceded from the Union in 1861, a sense of chivalry prevailed in defending the Confederacy.⁸ Law too, felt the urge and raised a company of infantry, mostly his students, at Dalton Alabama. His company would be one of ten companies to rally at Dalton to become the 4th Alabama infantry.⁹ Law was elected lieutenant colonel of the regiment at its organization, shortly before the Alabamians journeyed to Virginia in May 1861, to fight for the Confederacy. The 4th Alabama joined the Army of the Shenandoah¹⁰, under the command of Brigadier General Joseph E. Johnston, and was

assigned to Brigadier General Barnard E. Bee's Third Brigade.¹¹ After spending time in training, the regiment fought at the Battle of First Manassas, seeing its colonel killed in action, and Law wounded. However, Law recovered and was later elected unanimously Colonel of the 4th Alabama Regiment. When the regiment was sent to the Peninsular Campaign, Law commanded the brigade at Seven Pines and again during the Seven Days Campaign around Richmond. It was after the Battle of Seven Pines that the Alabama Brigade was reassigned to the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee.¹² During the Battle of Gaines's Mill, Law gained a renowned reputation as competent fighter and leader of men. Law, commanding William Henry Chase Whiting's old brigade, and John Bell Hood commanding the Texas Brigade, broke the Federal center, an event that led to a decisive Confederate victory. Under Law's leadership, the brigade continued to fight tenaciously at the bitter battles of Second Manassas and Sharpsburg, and also in their limited participation at Fredericksburg.

Law's commission as brigadier was dated 15 October 1862, to rank from 2 October. Law retained command of Whiting's old brigade, which remained in Hood's Division of two brigades. Before the Battle of Fredericksburg, Lee reorganized the army into two corps; Longstreet was given First Corps and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson Second Corps.¹³ As part of the reorganization, Hood's Division was increased to four brigades with the addition of George T. Anderson's and Henry Benning's Georgia brigades. In January 1863, Lee, at the urging of President Davis, reorganized again, this time along state lines. Law was given command of an Alabama brigade consisting of his old 4th and 44th regiments, with the 15th, 47th, and 48th Alabama regiments replacing his North Carolina and Mississippi regiments.

At Gettysburg, Law's Brigade was on the right of the Confederate lines and led the assault on the Round Tops. When Hood was wounded, Law, as senior brigadier in the division, assumed command of Hood's Division. Law's actions at Gettysburg were nothing less than gallant, even though the result of the battle at Gettysburg was a defeat for the Confederacy. The Alabamians fought ferociously during the bloody engagements at the Round Tops.

The aftermath of Gettysburg left Law bitter. From the beginning of the war, he was motivated by advancement in rank. First it was regimental command, then brigade command and before the Battle of Gettysburg his attention focused on division command. He earned his brigadier's commission through his leadership on the battlefield. However, just as important was Law's astute awareness of the political process. To gain the higher levels in rank, Law knew that candidates required nomination for appointment and political confirmation from the Confederate Senate. John Bell Hood became his military advocate. Louis T. Wigfall, the Texan politician who briefly commanded the Texas Brigade prior to Hood and resigned his commission to represent Texas in the Confederate Senate, became Law's advocate in the Confederate Congress. Wigfall lobbied members of the congress, in particular the Alabama delegation, on Law's behalf. Law's opportunity came early in the Battle of Gettysburg; Hood suffered a severe wound to his left arm. Years later Hood wrote that Law assumed command of the division, and in two days of fighting, proved himself, by his courage and ability, fully equal to the responsibilities of the position.¹⁴ Hood's assessment is based solely on what he was told by friends and colleagues after the conflict. Law did not submit an official

report from the Battle of Gettysburg, and the brigade commanders do not credit anything notable of Law's performance in their reports.

Law departed Gettysburg believing his conduct had exceeded expectations. He felt his opportunity to command the division would come soon. Longstreet, however, probably decided before Gettysburg that Law would not replace Hood. The First Corps commander favored Micah Jenkins, who ranked Law by 2 1/2 months, to command the division when the opportunity presented itself. Upon the return of the army to Virginia, and a period of rest and recuperation, the division was dispatched to General Bragg's Army of Tennessee in September 1863. Longstreet negotiated to have Jenkins's Brigade transferred to Hood's Division.¹⁵ Law was livid. He knew if Hood were not able to command the division, Jenkins would assume command. Between Law and Jenkins, classmates at the SCMA, there existed an intense rivalry that originated during military exercises at the college.¹⁶ Both were recommended for promotion to major general, but only one billet was available. When the Texas Brigade passed through Richmond, the convalescing Hood decided to join his men and resumed command, thus ending the controversy for the moment.

At Chickamauga, Law assumed command of the division, once again, when Hood was designated by Longstreet to command an assault column comprised of his division and two brigades from Major General Lafayette McLaws' Division, Kershaw's and Humphrey's Brigades. Jenkins, continuing his travel to the theater, did not reach the field in time to participate in the battle. Would Chickamauga provide another opportunity for Law to permanently command a division? Would his desire for higher command influence his decisions during the battle?

Henry Lewis Benning, Brigadier General, Commander of Benning's Brigade

Henry L. Benning, a native of Georgia, was born in 1814 on a plantation in Columbia County, Georgia, the son of Pleasant Moon and Matilda Meriwether White Benning, the third of eleven children. He attended Franklin College (University of Georgia), where he graduated with first honors at the age of twenty.¹⁷ Upon his graduation, he moved to Columbus, Georgia and there made his home for the rest of his life. At twenty-one he was admitted to the bar, and two years later was appointed solicitor-general for his judicial circuit. He afterward served a term in the General Assembly. Many sources describe Benning as intelligent, able, and dedicated to his profession. Mostly, Benning was a man of impeccable integrity.

As a judicial official and statesman, Benning was convinced that freeing the slaves would create such social chaos in the South as to make civilization impossible and life for the populace intolerable. He believed emancipation, and the subsequent freedom of the slaves, was inevitable if the South remained in the Union. He therefore became an avid secessionist. Yet while he felt secession necessary, he did not consider it be the answer to the problem. He feared some of the northernmost slave states might, for economic reasons, develop a sentiment against the institution, and he would protect the lower South from the chaos of emancipation by the formation of a "consolidated" Southern Republic, with strong centralized powers, so that slavery could be put "under the control of those most interested in it."¹⁸

In 1851, Benning accepted the nomination of the Southern Rights Democrats as one of their candidates for the U.S. Congress but was defeated. After the unsuccessful races for the General Assembly and Congress, the legislature elected Benning to the

Georgia Supreme Court in 1853. As an associate justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, Benning delivered an opinion in support of the principle that a state Supreme Court is not bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States on constitutional questions. At the expiration of his term in 1859 the General Assembly failed to reelect him, largely because of the political influence of his opponents.

A strong proponent of states rights, Benning urged Georgia's secession after the election of Lincoln. In 1861, he took an active part in the Georgia Convention, which adopted the Ordinance of Secession, and was sent by that body as its commissioner to the Virginia Convention. There he delivered a carefully prepared address on the race problem and secession. Benning's vote for secession sealed Georgia's membership as part of the Confederacy.

After Georgia's secession, Benning volunteered his services to the army. Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Benning raised the 17th Georgia Infantry, in which he was elected colonel in August 1861. His regiment was assigned to Brigadier General Robert Toombs' Brigade.

Toombs, like Benning, was a lawyer and politician, serving in both houses in his native Georgia and in the U.S. Senate. After the state's secession, he was named to the Provisional Confederate Congress where he served on the Committee on Finance. Desiring the presidency, he instead became the Confederacy's first portfolio (secretary) of state on 21 February 1861. Bored, he stepped down in July and entered the military service. Commissioned a brigadier general in July 1861, he commanded the brigade to which Benning's regiment was assigned. Seeing action in the Seven Days, he was criticized for his performance. In the summer of 1862, he was absent for a period of time,

attending to his responsibilities as a congressman in the Confederate congress. Benning led the brigade during his absence. Toombs returned, and was present at Antietam where his brigade performed creditably and he suffered a hand wound. In March 1863, Toombs was overlooked for promotion and submitted his resignation, thus giving Benning the opportunity to command a brigade of his own.¹⁹

Prior to Toombs' resignation, Benning commanded Toombs' Brigade at Second Manassas and Sharpsburg, while Toombs commanded the division. At Sharpsburg, Benning's defense of "Burnside's Bridge" over Antietam Creek was described as heroic, holding the bridge while his fellow Confederates prevented the Union troops from crossing the river.²⁰ In January 1863, Benning was promoted to brigadier general.²¹ However, it wasn't until after Toombs resignation that Benning was placed in command of his own brigade in Hood's Division.²² His record as a field officer and as brigadier general was distinguished. His fearless composure under combat earned him the nickname "Old Rock" from his troops. His brigade began to gain a reputation similar to its sister unit, the gallant "Texas Brigade".²³

In the invasion of Pennsylvania in July 1863, Benning's Brigade, as a member of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, assigned to Longstreet's First Corps, and Hood's Division, Benning led his men through the confusion of smoke and chaos at Gettysburg. Marching out of site behind Seminary Ridge on 2 July, the Georgians came into line behind and between Robertson's and Law's Brigade on the extreme right of the Confederate positions, facing the Round Tops, the Devil's Den, and a wheat field, where they were ordered to support the division's attack. However, as the attack began, Robertson's Brigade split in half, the 3rd Arkansas and 1st Texas regiments attacked to

west and north of Devil's Den. Benning's troops filled the gap created in the center of Robertson's Brigade and fought towards the southern end of Houck's Ridge against Ward's Brigade of federal troops and continued the fight further up the south face of the ridge. The remainder of the "Texas Brigade" and Law's Alabamians fought up the slopes of the "Little Round Top" against Colonel Strong Vincent's federal troops during the Battle of Gettysburg.²⁴ Benning fought through the heavy fighting at Gettysburg unscathed. His brigade broke through the Union lines on the south face of Houck's Ridge at Gettysburg, capturing Union forces and several pieces of artillery, and held the terrain until ordered to retreat.²⁵

Though Gettysburg proved to be a Confederate defeat, Benning never seemed to have lost hope that the South would win. The "Rock" Brigade, although maimed and reduced in size, was now hungry for retaliation.²⁶ In early September 1863, the brigade packed their gear with a renewed fighting spirit in the western theater of operations.

Jerome Robertson, Brigadier General, Commander of the "Texas Brigade"

Jerome B. Robertson was born of Scottish decent in Christian County, Kentucky, on March 14, 1815.²⁷ Robertson was the fourth child and youngest son of five children. As a young man, Jerome Robertson served as an apprentice of a local hatter. At the age of thirteen, his apprenticeship led him to St Louis, the hub of the fur and hat industry of the time, to practice his trade with his master. In St Louis, Robertson became an active member of the local Thespian Society, providing him opportunities to learn basic social skills and acquire some formal education. During his studies, Robertson became interested in the medical profession. In 1833, Robertson returned to Kentucky to seek his life's ambition to become a physician.²⁸ He met a local physician, Dr. W. H. Harris, who

recognized his ambition, and volunteered his services to provide a basic medical education and knowledge of the liberal arts.²⁹ With Dr. Harris' assistance, Robertson enrolled at the Transylvania College Medical School in 1834. He subsequently graduated in 1835 and returned to Owensboro, Kentucky, to practice his profession.³⁰

Soon after Robertson began his practice in Kentucky, the Mexican Department of Texas suffered its latest in a series of defeats in the Texas Republic's fight for independence at the hands of the Mexican Army led by Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. The pleas for assistance rang out to the United States. Robertson felt obligated to assist the Texans in their struggle for independence and volunteered his services to a regiment of Kentucky volunteers that was mustered in August 1836. After being elected second lieutenant of a company from Owensboro, Robertson and the company's captain, James L. Holmes, led their eighty-six man unit down the Mississippi and Gulf of Mexico to Texas, arriving in early September. Shortly after arriving in Texas, Captain Holmes was promoted to Major and transferred.³¹ Robertson was immediately elected as captain of the company.³² However, the last successful battle for the Texas Revolution, fought at San Jacinto, had taken place before the Kentucky unit arrived. Robertson's troops remained in Texas and offered their services to the Republic. The company was assigned to the Army of the Republic of Texas, performing a variety of duties. Furlough came sooner than expected in December 1836. The Texas president, Sam Houston, opposed a military establishment for the Republic and furloughed the Army in June 1837, which subsequently disbanded. Robertson, seeing opportunities in Texas, decided to remain and begin a new medical practice in Washington County. He became a respected member of his community in Washington County. Yet the "fighting Scot" always maintained a keen

interest in military matters and constantly volunteered his services to safeguard the frontier against Indian and Mexican excursions and depredations.³³

Though Robertson gained a solid reputation as a doctor, he still felt obligated to his community and sought political office in the Texas legislature. In 1847, Robertson was elected to the Texas House of Representatives and in 1849 to the state senate. In 1861, he was a delegate at the Texas Secession Convention that voted overwhelmingly for secession and the approval, ratification, and acceptance of the provisional government of the Confederate States of America, then in existence in Montgomery, Alabama.³⁴

Jerome Robertson, physician and politician, became an officer of the Confederate States of America. When the Confederate Secretary of War, Leroy Pope Walker, called the muster of troops in June 1861, Robertson was one of the first Texans to raise a company for Confederate military service in Virginia. Captain J. B. Robertson, CSA, would command that company of soldiers who would become the first troops of the Fifth Texas Infantry in John Bell Hood's Brigade.

In mid-July 1861, the Texas units arrived in Richmond and were camped at the "Fair Grounds" in the western outskirts of the Confederate capital.³⁵ The regiments spent the remainder of the summer conducting drills, training in tactics from the manual of arms, and guard duties. When hostilities commenced in northern Virginia, near Manassas, the Texas units were ordered to the field, but did not arrive in time for the battle. However, they remained to become part of the Confederate defenses south of the Potomac River.³⁶ While conducting duties along the Potomac, the Texans began to reorganize and build a brigade. Robertson received an appointment to lieutenant colonel

of the Fifth Texas Infantry, not serving a day in the rank of major.³⁷ In March 1862, Hood took command of the brigade as it established defensive positions around Fredericksburg.

In June 1862, Robertson rose to the rank of colonel and was given command of the Fifth Texas Infantry Regiment. He led his regiment through the summer of bloody battles at Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, Second Manassas, and Freeman's Ford, all fought in the eastern theater of operations for the Army of Northern Virginia.³⁸ In late October 1862, Hood was promoted to Major General and given command of the division. As the senior colonel in the brigade, Robertson took command the now famous Hood's Texas Brigade and subsequently promoted to Brigadier General on 1 November 1862.³⁹

The Texas Brigade had a reputation for their tenacity, fortitude, and audacity in battle that was similar to the personality of their Scottish commander. Though the Texans exhibited that tenacity at Gettysburg, they suffered their repulse as a fighting unit the afternoon of 2 July 1863. Now bruised and battered by the previous campaigns, could their endurance withstand the battle about to unfold in a new, unfamiliar theater in the west?

¹Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 75.

²Ezra Warner, Jr., *Generals in Gray: Lives of Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 143.

³John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies* (New Orleans: P. G. T. Beauregard, 1880; Lincoln and London, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 65.

⁴Frederick A. Eiserman, "Longstreet's Corps at Chickamauga: Lessons in Inter-Theater Deployment" (Masters Thesis, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1985), 40.

⁵Hood, 64.

⁶J. Gary Laine and Morris M. Penny, *Law's Alabama Brigade in the War Between the Union and the Confederacy* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., Inc., 1996), 2.

⁷Laine & Penny, 2.

⁸*Ibid*, 4.

⁹*Ibid*.

¹⁰Mark Mayo Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959, 738. On 20 July 1861, the Army of the Shenandoah combined with the Confederate Army of the Potomac. The combined force was called the Army of the Potomac, Boatner, 664.

¹¹Laine & Penny, 5.

¹²Robert E. Lee, *The Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee*, New York, NY: Konecky and Konecky, 1992, 73. On 31 May 1862, the Battle of Seven Pines was fought, and General Joseph E. Johnston, commanding the Confederate Army of the Potomac, was severely wounded. The next day, by order of the President (Jefferson Davis), General Lee assumed Johnston's command and renamed the command the Army of Northern Virginia; Boatner, 601.

¹³Boatner, 600-601.

¹⁴Hood, 60.

¹⁵James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 1896), 437.

¹⁶Sorrel, 187.

¹⁷Dave Dameron, *Benning's Brigade, Volume I, A History and Roster of the Fifteenth Georgia* (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1997), 38.

¹⁸Allan Nevins, with introduction by James M. McPherson, *Ordeal of the Union: Fruits of Manifest Destiny 1847-1852: A House Dividing 1852-1857*. (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 240-241. Benning, writing in the summer of 1849, to his fellow Georgian, Howell Cobb: "First then, it is apparent, horribly apparent, that the slavery question rides insolently over every other everywhere--in fact that is the only question which in the least affects the results of the elections." Later in the same letter Benning says, "I think then, *Ist*, that the only safety of the South from abolition universal is to be found in an *early* dissolution of the Union."

¹⁹Dameron, xii.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹O.R., Series I, Vol 25, Part II, 682

²²Hood, 46. Benning's Brigade, originally Toombs' Brigade, was assigned to Hood's Division, probably in early October 1862.

²³Dameron, xii.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Dameron, 55.

²⁷J. B. Robertson, *Touched with Valor, Civil War Papers and Casualty Reports of Hood's Texas Brigade*, (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1864; First edition limited to 750 copies, edited by Colonel Harold B. Simpson. Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1964), 2.

²⁸Ibid, 3.

²⁹Ibid, 4.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid, 5.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid, 8.

³⁴Ibid, 10.

³⁵Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: Lee's Grenadier Guard*, (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1970; Fourth Printing, Forth Worth, TX: Landmark Publishing, Inc., 1999), 48.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid, 64.

³⁸Robertson, 12.

³⁹Ibid, 36-37.

CHAPTER 2

JOURNEY WESTWARD

Never before were such crazy cars--passenger, baggage, mail, coal, box, platform, all and every sort wobbling on the jumping strap-iron--used for hauling good soldiers.¹

In late August and early September 1863, the members of Hood's Division, under the command of Law, were encamped in familiar territory along the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers, in and around Fredericksburg. Most of the brigades had occupied similar positions earlier in the year. The Georgians from Benning's "Rock" Brigade encamped behind the Rappahannock, near the Chancellorsville battleground northwest of town. George "Tige" Anderson's Brigade of five Georgia regiments occupied positions northwest of the city, east of Benning's troops. Robertson's Brigade of Texans and Arkansans established camps on the city's south side. The Alabamian troops from Law's Brigade, under the command of Colonel James Sheffield from the 48th Alabama Infantry Regiment, initially established pickets along the Rappahannock, at all river crossings from Fredericksburg east to Port Royal, to report any attempted crossing by the Federals who had recently been spotted in the area. On 2 September, Robertson was ordered by Law to replace the Alabamians along the Rappahannock. Law's Brigade fell back to encampments east of Fredericksburg after they were replaced by Robertson's troops. Benning's Brigade moved to positions in defense of Richmond and actively recruited men from the area to replenish their ranks.

The need for replacements for the division was great, but replacements for those lost at Gettysburg were hard to find. The battles never seemed to end. Since the

beginning of the war, struggles were fought, battlefields policed of wounded, and the dead buried. Then they were off to the next conflict. Very few furloughs had been granted in the previous two years. If the life of a Confederate soldier was not hard enough, the separation from friends and loved ones became excruciating for some.

Desertions became more frequent. Being so close to their homes, many of the soldiers from the Alabama and Georgia regiments just walked away from their units. Most were the primary breadwinners of their families, and with war so close to their homes, they felt obligated to tend to the needs and safety of their families rather than those of the Confederacy. So frequent were the desertions that President Davis resorted to granting amnesty to those who returned to their units. Only a few soldiers took advantage of his offer.

At their respective encampments, the troops rested and performed light duty to help alleviate the recent memories of the Gettysburg engagements at Little Round Top and Devil's Den. This was the first period of inaction for the division's troops in nearly two months. Throughout the brigades, days were spent drilling and training. Ceremonial parades and in-rank inspections were frequent, usually drawing large crowds of young ladies from the local population. Many soldiers spent their off-duty time receiving and writing letters home. Care packages from home, containing clothing, shoes, and jackets, were a beautiful sight. Months of fighting had shown their wear on their tattered uniforms and clothing, with some soldiers nearly down to their bare underwear.

Pay for several months of fighting arrived for troops from Robertson's brigade. The average basic pay was around \$29.00, but some would receive their promised \$50.00

enlistment bonus. Soon the cards and blankets were retrieved from the haversacks and the poker games commenced. A good many of the troops lost all of their pay by day's end.²

A renewed spiritual fervor invaded the division's troops as well. Best known as the "Great Revival," this infectious interest in religion swept through the Confederate army. Led by chaplains, Christian officers, and men in the brigades and regiments, nightly services were held where preachers read from their bibles, orated their interpretations, and prayed to the higher for those who had died during their service to the Confederacy. Nearly all services concluded with baptisms, in the nearby Rapidan or Rappahannock rivers, for those who were reborn into Christianity.

However, the time of rest and recuperation was short lived. The strategic plan to reinforce Bragg called for two divisions of Longstreet's First Corps and an artillery battalion. Hood and McLaws' divisions, each directed to keep a brigade in Virginia, and Colonel Edward P. Alexander's artillery battalion were the units selected.³ In total, nine infantry brigades and twenty-six artillery pieces would begin their journey westward. Major General George Pickett's Division, severely depleted of officers at Gettysburg, was to remain in Virginia. Longstreet accompanied the two divisions to command the forces.

The original plan to reinforce Bragg was for the units to travel over an estimated 540 miles west by rail through Virginia and Tennessee, a two to four days journey. However, just prior to the movement, Federal forces from the Army of the Ohio, under the command of Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, seized the railroad intersections at Knoxville, Tennessee. The Union control of the railroads at Knoxville forced the Confederate leadership to adjust Longstreet's travel plans. Planning flexibility and rapid

development of alternate courses of action were essential.⁴ Almost overnight, new routes were selected and coordinated by the Confederate Quartermaster-General, Brigadier General Alexander R. Lawton and Major Frederick W. Sims, Chief of the Railroad Bureau, and other commercial rail agents.⁵ Now the troops from Hood's Division would have to travel an estimated 800-900 miles through the Carolinas and Georgia to reinforce Bragg, some 260-360 miles longer than the direct route lost to Burnside.

Longstreet ordered the division to move on 7 September. Hood's Division would move first, followed by McLaws and Alexander's artillery battalion, respectively. By the 8th, the men of Hood's Division, without Anderson's Brigade, had left the Rappahannock-Rapidan line and were marching or riding toward Richmond.⁶

In late August 1863, Federal forces were massing for an assault upon the Confederate defenses around Charleston Harbor, outside Charleston, South Carolina. On 8 September, Confederate General Pierre Gustave Toutant (P. G. T) Beauregard, commander of Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, sent a request to the Confederate War Department for reinforcements to counter the growing masses of Federal troops around Charleston, South Carolina.⁷ On 9 September, the Confederate War Department complied with Beauregard's request and directed General Lee to send troops. That same day, Longstreet, at Lee's request, sent Anderson's Brigade to James Island to guard against any threat of Federal forces at Charleston Harbor.⁸ Longstreet had a choice of which brigade to send and chose Anderson's Brigade for fear that the Georgians would desert while traveling through Georgia, without Anderson's leadership. Anderson was still recovering from wounds he received at Gettysburg.

On 11 September, while the division was in transit, Longstreet convinced Lee to transfer Brigadier General Micah Jenkins' Brigade of South Carolina troops to Hood's Division, under the command of Law. Longstreet's intent was, initially, for Jenkins' Brigade to replace Anderson's Brigade and round out the division for the journey west.⁹ However, Longstreet's intentions were twofold. Not only would he gain an additional brigade, but also he desired to have Jenkins, a protégé of Longstreet's, command the division rather than Law. Jenkins' Brigade was assigned to Major General D. H. Hill's Division in the Department of North Carolina until 13 July 1863, when Hill, nominated for the rank of Lieutenant General, was assigned to assume command of Lieutenant General William J. Hardee's 2nd Corps, Army of Tennessee. Jenkins' Brigade was located near Richmond recruiting and awaiting instructions. After Jenkins received his orders, his troops moved to join Longstreet's Corps.

On 9 September, the Texas Brigade boarded the trains at Richmond. General Hood, his arm still heavily bandaged from the Gettysburg wound, came down to the station to meet the officers and men of the division. It was during this visit that the Texans implored him to join them in their journey to Georgia.¹⁰ Hood's return temporarily ended the confusion of who would lead the division in battle. Regardless, Jenkins and his troops were still traveling along the rails when the battle was fought. Jenkins would not arrive in northern Georgia until the evening of the 21 September.

Only five of the nine infantry brigades to make the journey would be available for the battle: the brigades of Robertson, Benning, and Law from Hood's Division, and Kershaw and Humphrey's brigades from McLaws' Division. Alexander's guns and troops did not begin movement until the afternoon of 17 September, and also would not

arrive at Ringgold Station until the early morning hours of 25 September, five days after the battle.

Most of the evening of 7 September was spent preparing for the journey. Three days rations were cooked by most of the units. Haversacks and equipment were packed and stowed. Even a few last minute baptisms were conducted for those men desiring to make peace with their maker before the next battle. By the evening's end, the brigades were prepared to break camp quickly the next morning.

The early hours of 8 September were filled with activity as the regiments broke camp and began their travels westward. Benning's men marched to Petersburg, Virginia, from their positions around Richmond, and loaded onto the trains.¹¹ Robertson's troops marched to Milford Station to board the train for Richmond.¹² The Alabamians left their camps near Fredericksburg and marched along Telegraph Road, bivouacking the night of 8 September ten miles north of Richmond. On the 9th, the men of Law's Brigade loaded the trains at Hanover Junction and later that day, arrived in Richmond.¹³

After leaving Richmond, the division's troops traveled to Weldon, North Carolina. From Weldon, the division traveled on two primary rail routes (figure 1.). The first route ran through North Carolina, from Weldon to Wilmington, to Florence and Kingsville, South Carolina, then to Augusta, Atlanta, and Dalton, Georgia, to Catoosa Station, the railway stop just south of Ringgold, Georgia. The second routed the troops from Weldon to Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina, and Columbia South Carolina, to Augusta and Atlanta, Georgia, then to Dalton and Ringgold, Georgia.¹⁴ Robertson's brigade traveled along the first route. Benning's and Law's brigades would travel the latter.

Routes used to transport “Hood’s Division” to Chickamauga

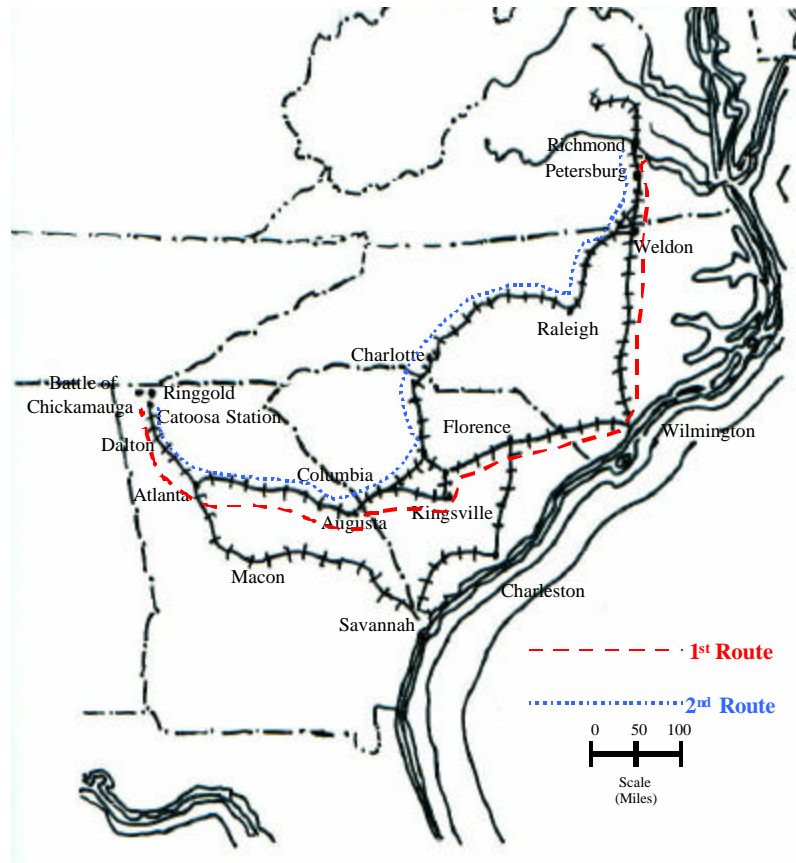


Figure 1. Routes for Journey to Ringgold

The troops of Hood's Division traveled their respective routes under the most austere conditions. The trip was made upon cramped and uncomfortable trains of every description. Most soldiers traveled in cramped boxcars protected from the elements throughout the journey, though accommodations did vary. Some soldiers shared their space with the horses while others rode the entire trip standing. Still others, however, climbed on top of the boxcars and onto flatbeds, exposing them to adverse weather, overhanging branches, and other obstacles resulting in sickness, injury, or death. One historian noted that a private from the 48th Alabama fell to his death between Charlotte and Columbia. As the norm, soldiers did their best to make themselves as comfortable as they could. Soldiers departing on the earlier trains, exposed to the heat of the late summer time, tore away the planking of the stuffy boxcars to find relief. Those leaving Richmond later, experienced damp, cold conditions from the unseasonable rains, and had to scavenge materials to repair the boxcars for protection.¹⁵

The journey had many pleasant and often humorous events. At nearly every stop, the men from the division were greeted with cheers, kisses, food, and clothing. While in Wilmington, North Carolina, the Texas Brigade made its presence known in the unsavory waterfront section known as "Paddy's Hollow." Having consumed several rounds of the John Barleycorn spirits, Robertson's men soon became unruly. When a local police force was summoned to expel them, the Texans mistook the officers in their blue uniforms for Yankees, formed a battle line, and staggered to charge. One constable in his late fifties was badly beaten about the face, a shillelagh blow to the ear knocked another down, and a third officer suffered two knife wounds in his side.¹⁶ The policemen withdrew, making no arrests, leaving the waterfront to the mercy of the rowdy Texans.

While alcoholic spirits influenced Robertson's Texans, unappreciated pro-Unionist articles published in a newspaper, *The North Carolina Southern*, in Raleigh, North Carolina, infuriated Benning's troops. Editorials by the newspaper's publisher, William H. Holden, endorsed peace policies and pro-Unionist ideas that were topics of many heated discussions among the troops from Hood's Division. The Georgia troops disembarked the depot at Raleigh and immediately sought out the offices of the *Southern*. They battered down the entrance to the facilities and began to pillage the office, flinging cases of paper, type print templates, and kegs of ink throughout and into the streets. The rampage continued with the destruction of furniture and equipment, but left the printing press untouched. The event was so disruptive and destructive that it prompted North Carolina Governor Zebulon B. Vance to telegraph a complaint to President Davis about his displeasure, threatening to burn bridges and block roads throughout North Carolina to keep the soldiers out of his towns. Davis responded with assurances to the governor that the passing troops would no longer be permitted to venture into the towns from the depots.¹⁷

On 11 September, Law's troops also left the depot at Raleigh with the same intent. However, without the assistance from local populace, the Alabamians were unable to locate the establishment and resolved to return to the depot for the next leg of their journey.

At many stations, stops were arranged so the troops could enjoy meals prepared in their honor. In Sumter, South Carolina, a spread of food was prepared for Hood's Texas Brigade. The train stopped briefly, and the leaders in the brigade allowed Robertson's men to disembark and feast.

In Atlanta on 15 September, Colonel M. H. Wright, reported to Bragg's assistant adjutant general, Colonel George Brent, the onward movement of Robertson's Brigade towards Catoosa Station, via Resaca, with 1,300 troops. The 1,200 Georgians and 2,000 Alabamians soon followed the Texans.¹⁸ On Thursday, 17 September, Hood's Division, under the command of Law, with 4,500 troops, reached their final destination as the trains chugged into Catoosa Station in northern Georgia. The first to arrive was the famed Texas Brigade under Brigadier General Jerome Robertson. A few hours later the brigades of Georgians and Alabamians arrived. Hood was still a day away, and General Longstreet, traveling with the second division under the temporary command of South Carolinian Joseph Kershaw, was still two days away. Though the journey west left many of the soldiers exhausted by the time they arrived at Catoosa Station, the morale of the men was high.

¹ Sorrel, 189.

² Harold B. Simpson, *Gaines' Mill to Appomattock*. 2nd Edition (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1988), 150.

³ O.R., Series I, Vol 29, Part II, 706; Longstreet, 436. Because of the great loss of officers within his division, Major General George Pickett's Division remained in Richmond.

⁴ Eiserman, 31.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ O.R., Series I, Vol 29, Part II, 706.

⁷ O.R., Series I, Vol 28, Part II, 347, 349.

⁸ O.R., Series I, Vol 29, Part II, 706.

⁹ Ibid, 713; Longstreet, 437.

¹⁰Harold B. Simpson, “*The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*,” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 1969), 326; Hood, 61; McMurry, 76.

¹¹Dameron, 55.

¹²Simpson, “*The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*,” 322.

¹³Laine & Penny, 139.

¹⁴Edward P. Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, 2nd Edition (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 449; Longstreet, 436.

¹⁵Laine & Penny, 141.

¹⁶Simpson, *Gaines’ Mill to Appomattock*, 153.

¹⁷O.R., Series I, Vol 29, Part II, 710.

¹⁸O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part IV, 652.

CHAPTER 3

BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA: EVENTS OF 18-19 SEPTEMBER 1863

E'en as they fell in files they lay, like mowers grass at close of day.¹

W. R. Houghton, 2nd Georgia Infantry Regiment, 1863.

18 September 1863

After the Tullahoma Campaign from 23 June - 3 July 1863, Major General William S. Rosecrans renewed his offensive, determined to force the Confederates out of Chattanooga. The three army corps, XIVth, XXth, and XXIst, and Major General Gordon Granger's Reserve Corps, comprising Rosecrans' army, split and set out for Chattanooga by separate routes. In early September, Rosecrans consolidated his forces scattered in Tennessee and Georgia and forced Bragg's army out of Chattanooga, heading south. The Federal troops followed it and brushed with it at Davis' Crossroads on 10-11 September. Bragg was determined to reoccupy Chattanooga and decided to meet a part of Rosecrans' army, defeat them, and then move back into the city. On the 17th he headed north, intending to meet and beat the XXI Army Corps before it could reach Rossville, southeast of Chattanooga.

The undulating terrain in this northern Georgia region is a forest of trees and thickets covering most of the ground near the Chickamauga Creek. Similar to the frontier style of the times, local farmers had yards and tilled fields fenced and allowed their livestock to range freely in the pastures and timber outside the fences. Over the years, the animals had trampled and grazed many shrubs and thickets, leaving spaces between wood lines free from underbrush, permitting tall prairie grasses to flourish. Throughout the dense forest, thick briars of vegetation blocked visibility and restricted maneuvers. Some

openings in the forest did permit the limited movement of artillery pieces, but considerably diminished their fields of fire.

Robertson's Texas Brigade reached Catoosa Station, Georgia, in the mid-afternoon of 17 September 1863. The men unloaded their equipment, amounting to only their rifles and 40 cartridges of ammunition per man, and moved to a bivouac site for the night at nearby Ringgold. That evening, the Texans prepared rations, ate, and made final preparations for the battle. The brigade was the first of Hood's men to reach Ringgold, the rendezvous point in northwestern Georgia for the reinforcements coming to Bragg from Lee's and Johnston's respective armies. Benning's Brigade followed the Texans a few hours later, and Law's Brigade arrived that evening. General Hood was still a day away.

Six miles south of Catoosa, General Braxton Bragg, commander of the Army of Tennessee, at his headquarters at Lee's Tan Yard, spent most of the evening of 17 September developing a plan to counter Federal movements towards Chattanooga. His intelligence reports identified the location of the Federal forces' most northern elements in the vicinity of Lee and Gordon's Mill, approximately ten miles west of Catoosa Station. Bragg envisioned preventing Rosecrans' forces from advancing towards Chattanooga and either destroying the Army of the Cumberland near Lee and Gordon's Mill or driving it south, thus cutting off Rosecrans' lines of communication and supply base at Chattanooga. His scheme of maneuver was simple, a typical hammer and anvil concept. Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk's Corps was to begin an assault to fix the forces of Major General Thomas Crittenden's XXI Corps at Lee and Gordon's Mill. Polk was the anvil. Major General Simon Buckner's and Major General William H. T.

Walker's Corps were to cross the creek and wheel to the west, like a hammer, and drive the federals from the field. To do this, Bragg needed to get forces west of Chickamauga Creek and secure the bridges necessary to advance his artillery pieces and supply wagons. Walker's forces were to clear the crossing at Alexander's Bridge. Bragg also needed another crossing in the north to support the movement of troops gathering at Ringgold. Thus, he consolidated the forces he had available at Ringgold. Bragg created a provisional division under the command of the most senior brigadier, Brigadier General Bushrod Johnson. Robertson's Brigade from Hood's Division, along with the Johnson's brigades of Brigadier General John Gregg, Brigadier General Evander McNair, and Johnson's own brigade, under Colonel John S. Fulton's command, formed a provisional division on the evening of 17 September under Johnson's leadership.² Bragg's initial instructions to Johnson were to move south along the road towards Bragg's headquarters at Leet's Tan Yard, then head west to join Walker's troops at Alexander's Bridge.

Johnson consolidated and organized his division at Catoosa, directing orders to the brigade commanders under his provisional command. Gregg's, McNair's, and Fulton's Brigades were the core of his improvised command. Robertson's Texans acted as the division's reserve and provided support to Johnson's forces as they advanced. Bragg had the men of the Alabama Brigade, unable to cook their rations in Virginia prior to the journey, remain at the station to do so. Once finished, they were to move and catch up with the Johnson's command. Benning's Brigade remained at Ringgold, providing security for the depot there. It too, was to move up to the command once relieved of the guard mission.

At 0500 on 18 September, Johnson's Provisional Division left Ringgold and marched south towards Bragg's headquarters. However, Bragg, realizing the previous night that an enemy force was located in the vicinity of Reed's Bridge, sent a messenger with instructions to redirect Johnson's forces northwest towards the bridge and dislodge the Federal troops from Chickamauga Creek. Bragg's amended orders to Johnson were:

Cross at or near Reed's Bridge, turn to the left by the most practicable route and sweep up the Chickamauga towards Lee and Gordon's Mill.'³

Upon receiving these new instructions, Johnson's column abruptly turned about and retraced its steps toward Catoosa, veering east to west along the road from Ringgold towards Reed's Bridge.

While advancing toward Reed's Bridge, the Texas Brigade passed a column of the 8th Texas Cavalry, affectionately known as Terry's Texas Rangers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Gustave Cook, and warm greetings were exchanged between the two units. For the first time in the war, the Texas Brigade would fight alongside other cavalry and infantry units from the Lone Star State. The 7th Texas Infantry, commanded by Hiram D. Granbury was in John Gregg's Brigade, also assigned to Bushrod Johnson's Provisional Division.

Screened by elements of Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry, Johnson's Provisional Division proceeded toward Reed's Bridge across the Chickamauga. Along the way, Johnson's men met Federal resistance in the form of Colonel Robert Minty's cavalry brigade. The Texas Brigade served as the reserve force as the Confederates slowly drove the Federals successively across the bridge over Pea Vine Creek, Pea Vine Ridge, and the Chickamauga.

Johnson's Movements Morning of 18 September 1863

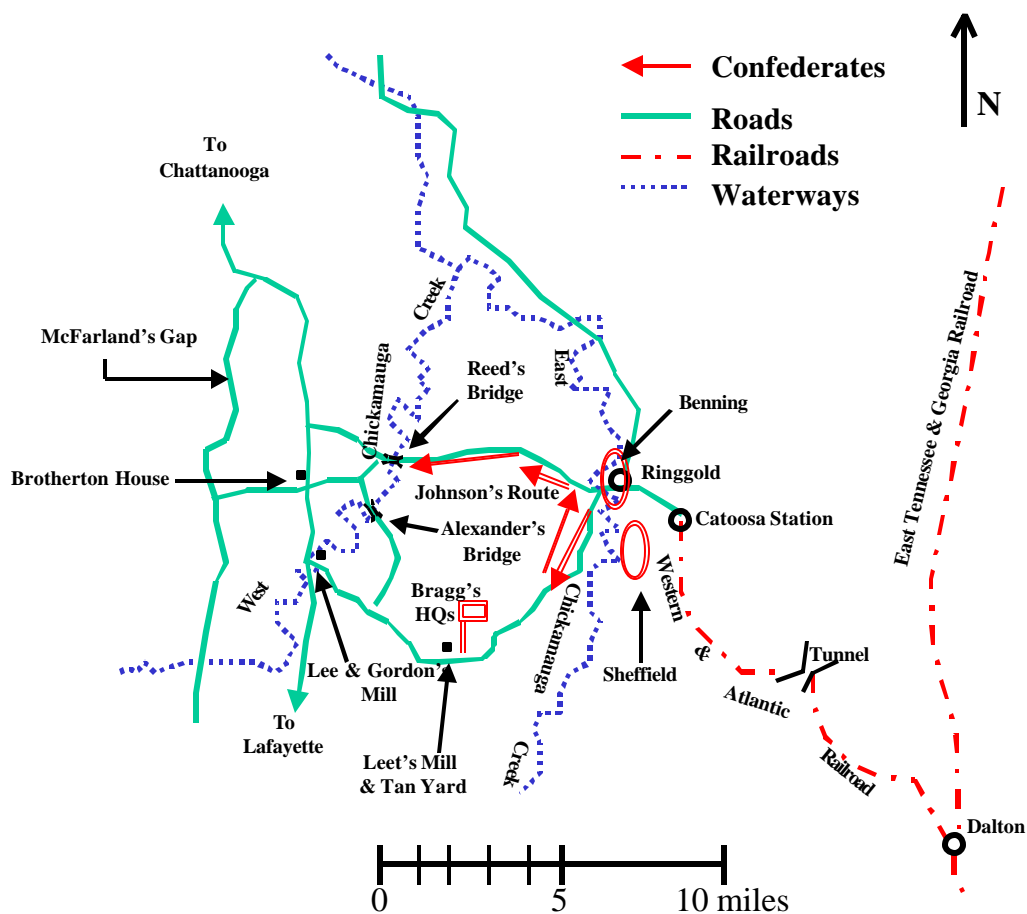


Figure 2. Bushrod Johnson's Movements, 18 September 1863.

About 1500, Johnson's Division was preparing to cross the Chickamauga at Reed's Bridge when Major General Hood, who had arrived at Catoosa Station around noon that day, met Johnson's column and assumed command of the Provisional Division. Hood sent skirmishers forward to support Forrest's cavalry and ordered Major Felix H. Robertson's Reserve Artillery Battalion forward and to unlimber.⁴ Major Robertson was the son of Brigadier General Jerome B. Robertson, commander of the Texas Brigade. Johnson's Division then crossed the Chickamauga, advanced a quarter of a mile to Jay's Stream Saw Mill, turned south at the mill, and advanced up the west side of the Chickamauga. Forrest's troops provided flank security as Hood's column, with minimal enemy resistance, continued its march southwest along Jay's Mill Road.

Meanwhile, as Hood's column crossed Reed's Bridge, Bragg's troops, from Major General Simon Buckner's Corps and Major General William Walker's Reserve Corps, marched from the south on the road towards Alexander's Bridge to link up with Hood. Walker's cavalry and infantry confronted and fought with Federal cavalry and mounted infantry armed with Spencer repeating rifles. Their advance was halted. Federal troops pulled up planks from Alexander's Bridge, preventing Walker from linking up with Hood's column on time.

At the intersection of Jay's Mill Road and Alexander's Bridge Road, Hood's column turned southwest, and followed Alexander's Bridge Road towards Lee and Gordon's Mill. After a march of 2 1/2 miles, and near dusk, the column met enemy resistance about 800 yards east of the Viniard House on the Lafayette Road, where Federal troops were deployed. Federal volleys, so precise and continuous, forced the column of Confederate troops, nearly two miles in length, to deploy to meet the action.

Advance of Hood's Column General Situation 18 September 1863

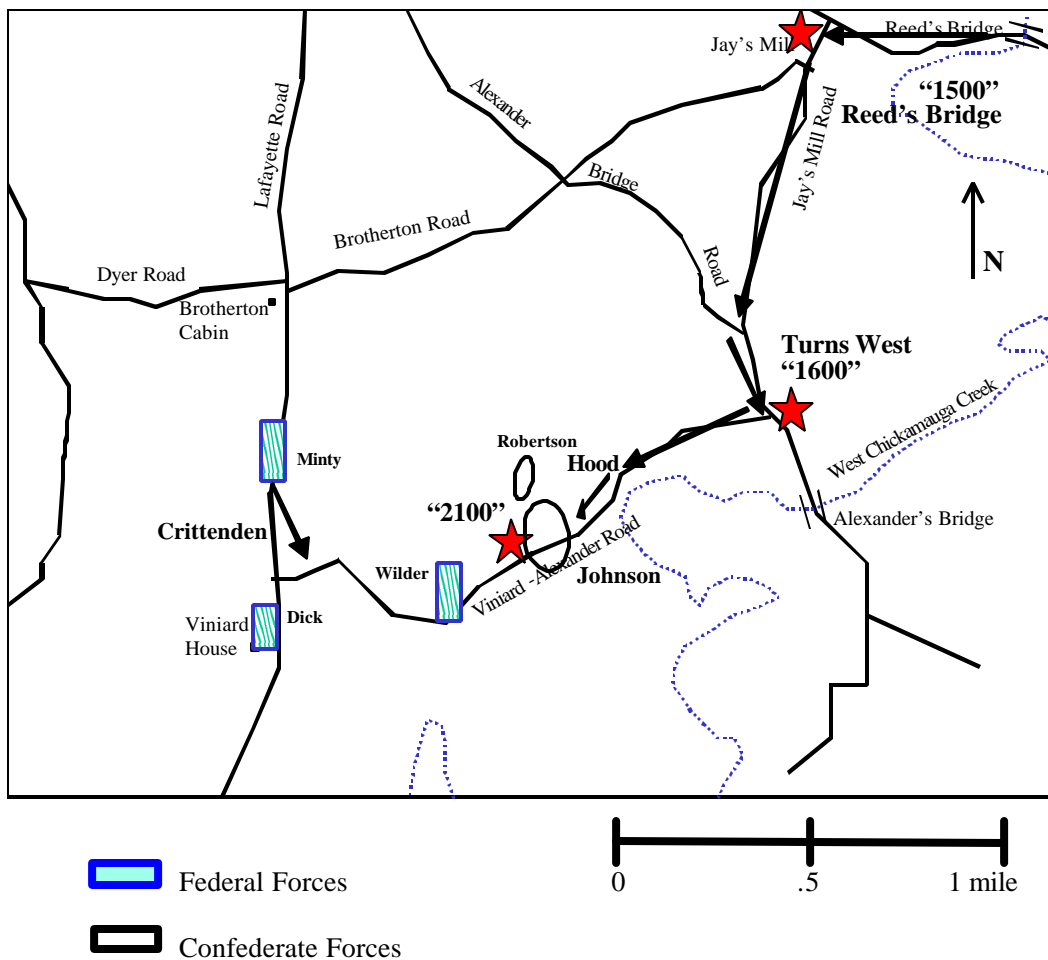


Figure 3. Advance of Hood's Column, 18 September 1863.

Hood and Johnson had just had a taste of the Spencer Rifles from Colonel John T. Wilder's Brigade.⁵ Wilder's troops were the only combatants on the field at Chickamauga to be outfitted with the seven-shot repeating Spencer Rifles. Wilder was reinforced by Colonel Minty's troops, arriving from the Reed's Bridge vicinity, and two regiments from Colonel George Dick's 2nd Brigade, Brigadier General Horatio Van Cleve's 3rd Division, General Thomas L. Crittenden's XXIst Corps.

Gregg's troops felt the first sting. McNair's and Fulton's Brigades moved rapidly forward and Robertson's troops followed close behind. Gregg's Brigade deployed to the west towards Lafayette Road, as McNair and Fulton fell in on his right flank. Robertson continued to maneuver the Texas Brigade forward. When the forward lines of Hood's deployed column came within fifty yards of the enemy, Wilder's troops fired another volley. The blast sent the Confederate troops back 200 yards. It was now 2100, and darkness had settled upon the battlefield. Surprised by the opposition and shocked by the vast volumes of fire, Hood disengaged his column and fell back an additional 600 yards. However, with the darkness of nightfall and maneuvering through unfamiliar terrain, Hood determined that the troops had had enough fighting for the day and ordered general breastworks constructed as the regiments established defensive positions.

Hood deployed Johnson's Provisional Division and its attachments in defensive positions, 800 yards east of the Viniard House, facing in three directions. The Texas Brigade faced northwest towards the Lafayette Road. Benning's and Law's Brigades moved up during the night and early morning of 19 September, and established bivouacs east of Robertson's positions. One-third of the men were required to remain on duty through the night, while the remaining two-thirds were ordered to sleep on their arms.⁶

Throughout the night, Hood's command could hear the ringing of axes and rumbling of artillery as the Federals constructed breastworks and moved their guns into position.⁷

19 September 1863

As 19 September dawned, the two armies opposed each other along a six-mile front generally divided by the Lafayette Road. The battleground was a mix of thick woods and dense undergrowth, making maneuvering difficult. A few hills and clearings with cabins dotted the landscape.

As Longstreet was still enroute from Virginia, Bragg assigned Hood temporary command of Longstreet's Corps. Hood's command included Bushrod Johnson's Division and his own division. Law was given temporary command of Hood's Division. James Sheffield, commander of the 48th Alabama Infantry, moved up to command Law's Brigade. Hood took his staff with him to his temporary command. Law, likewise, took his staff with him to division command, but Sheffield left his regimental staff with the 48th Alabama. With no officers to manage the direction of movements or the execution of orders, confusion would spread throughout the Alabama Brigade during the two days of fighting at Chickamauga. The brigade fought piecemeal, losing much of its ability to mass fires at decisive points during the battle.

The Confederate left front consisted of the divisions of (left to right) Thomas Hindman, William Preston, Bushrod Johnson, A. P. Stewart, and Evander Law. At 1000, Law's Division moved from its bivouac sites and deployed into battle lines with the Texas Brigade on the left, Law's Alabama Brigade (now under James Sheffield) on the right, and Benning's Brigade centered behind the other brigades. Robertson's Texas

Hood's Corps General Situation 0700, 19 September 1863

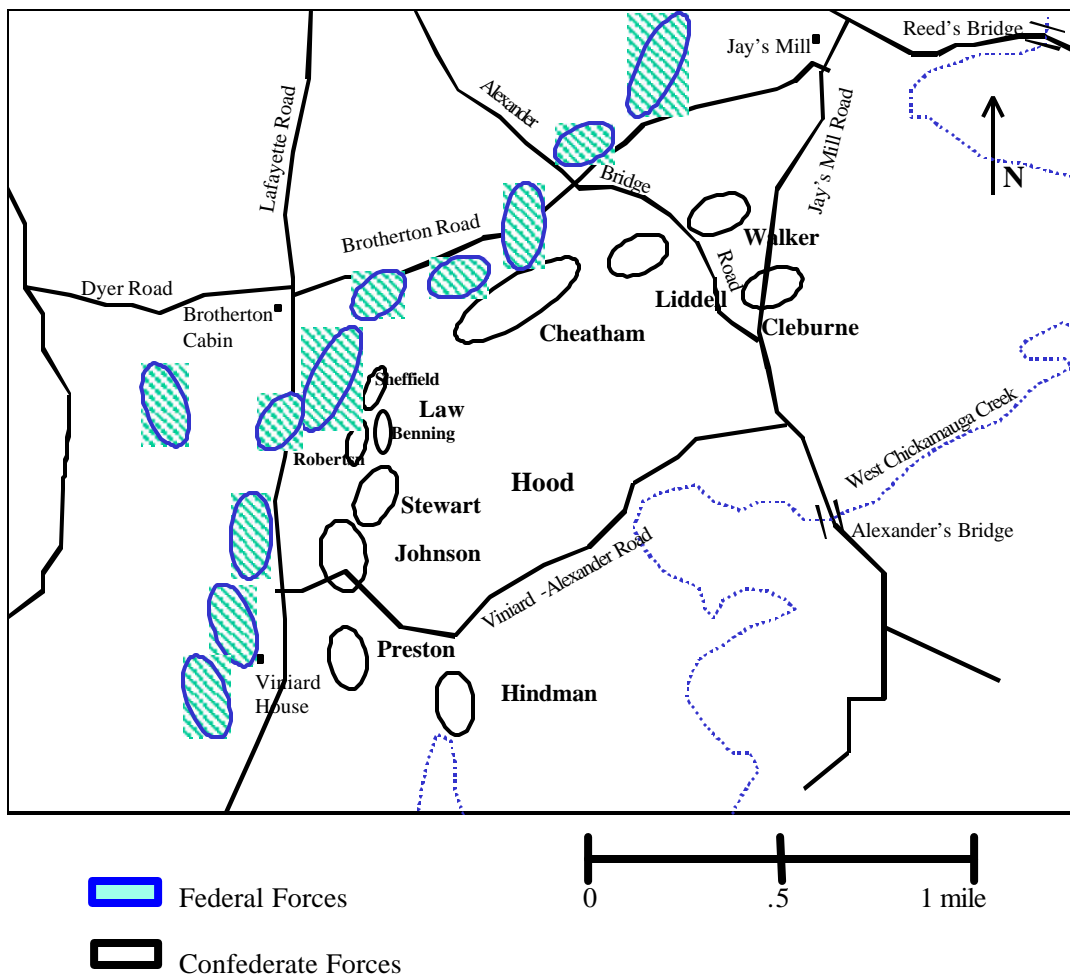


Figure 4. General Situation, 19 September 0700.

Brigade, still posted in its position of the previous night, was formed from left to right: 3rd Arkansas (under Colonel Van Manning), 1st Texas (under Captain R. J. Harding), 4th Texas (under Lieutenant Colonel John Bane), and 5th Texas (under Major J. C. Rogers). Sheffield arrayed the Alabama Brigade, left to right, with the 15th Alabama (under Colonel W.C. Oates), 48th Alabama (under Lieutenant Colonel W.M. Hardwick), 47th Alabama (under Major James Campbell), 4th Alabama (under Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Scruggs), and 44th Alabama (under Colonel William F. Perry). The Georgians positioned, left to right, with the 15th Georgia (under Col. D.M. DuBose), 20th Georgia (under Colonel J.D. Waddell), 17th Georgia (under Lieutenant Colonel C.W. Matthews), and 2nd Georgia (under Lieutenant Colonel W.S. Shepherd).⁸

As the division was forming into its battle lines, General Hood rode by on his horse, Jeff Davis, surprising the brigades of Sheffield and Benning, who still believed Hood was recovering in Richmond. The troops were overjoyed and dismissed military protocol by cheering and waving as he rode by. Hood cheerfully acknowledged the troops, tipping his hat and responding, "Remember boys, we are here to whip them."⁹ The division was not involved in the fighting most of the morning, but continued to maneuver for improved vantage points in the woods and undergrowth, while awaiting for the attack to begin in earnest.

The Battle of Chickamauga continued at 0730, 19 September 1863, far on the right of Bragg's Confederate front. By mid-morning, the battle had developed in earnest on the right. The members of Hood's Division heard the sound of the guns in the distance to the north, gradually progressing in their direction. At approximately 1315, Bragg sent

Array of Hood's Division 1400 19 September 1863

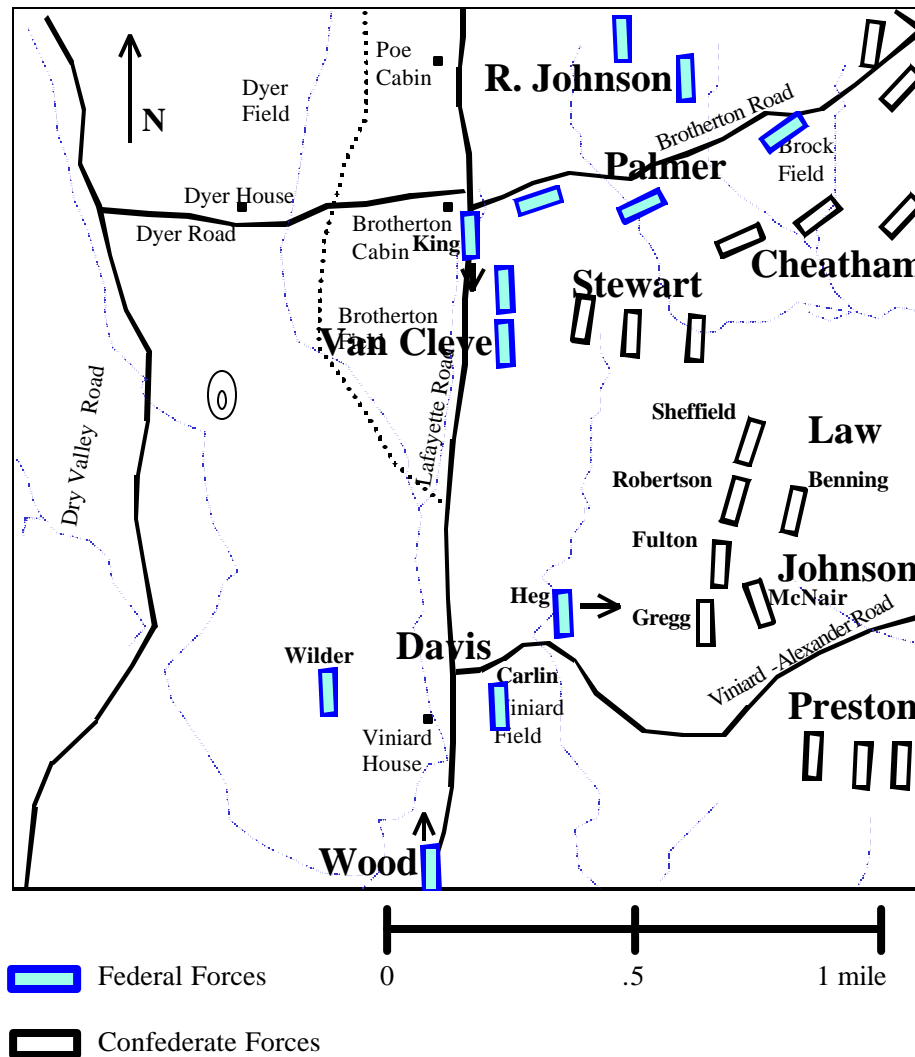


Figure 5. Array of Hood's Division, 1400, 19 September 1863.

orders to Major General A. P. Stewart to withdraw from his position left of Law and march his division, behind Law's troops, to a position in the north where the fighting had commenced. Why Bragg did not have Hood's Division execute this order is unknown. Regardless, Stewart executed the order and moved north, supporting Major General Patrick Cleburne's Division in the fight. Hood's Division laid on the ground awaiting the advance of Stewart's troops, now on their right.

By mid-afternoon, the Confederate left was engaged. From the vicinity of the Viniard House, the Federals crossed the Lafayette Road and drove back Bushrod Johnson's skirmishers. At 1430, Hood ordered Johnson's Division forward against Major General Jefferson C. Davis' division of Alexander McCook's XXth Corps.¹⁰ While Hood's Division waited to be ordered forward in support of Johnson, it was subjected to heavy but inaccurate shelling and long-range small arms fire.

Between 1445 and 1500, Hood ordered his old division forward to assist Johnson. Hood directed Law, commanding the division, to wheel the division to the southwest and follow Johnson's right brigade, commanded by Col. John S. Fulton, towards Lafayette Road. Sheffield led the Alabama brigade through the woods and underbrush, clouded by smoke drifting over them from the fighting on their right. As the Texans moved forward, they encountered many stragglers from Johnson's Division moving to the rear.¹¹ Robertson wanted to maneuver together with Sheffield's Brigade, on his right, so that both brigades could support Fulton. However, Robertson struggled to keep his brigade on line with Sheffield's Brigade. Johnson's stragglers became too troublesome, the terrain too difficult, and as Federal shells whistled and burst over their heads, all Robertson

Hood's Division Begins the Assault 1500, 19 September

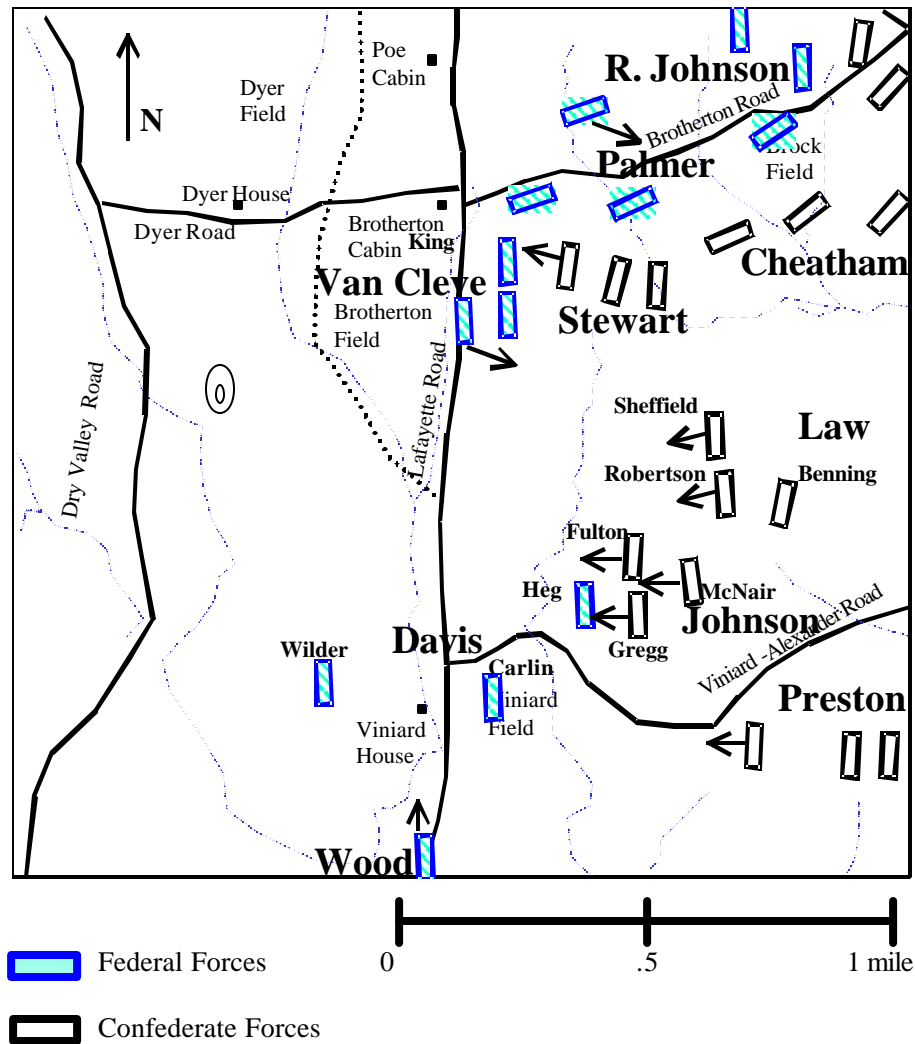


Figure 6. Hood's Division begins the assault.

could do was to keep his troops prone until he could regain control of his lines. At about 1530, the Texas troops emerged from the heavy underbrush and woods and marched into the Viniard Field. During the confusion, Johnson's and Law's Divisions crossed paths, with Johnson's troops maneuvering to the north and Law's south. When Robertson resumed his advance, the Texans saw Brigadier General John Gregg of Johnson's Division, who had been shot through the neck and dragged by his horse's reins towards the Texas Brigade, lying in the field between the enemy lines. Gregg's spurs and sword were being pilfered by some adventurous Federals when Robertson's troops charged forward, drove off the Yankee scavengers, and rescued Gregg and his horse.¹² Robertson's advance relieved the pressure off Gregg, but drew the attention of troops from Brigadier General Hans Heg's 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, XXth Corps.

As the Texas Brigade advanced some 500-600 yards into the clearing of the Viniard Field, Federals hiding in a ditch covered by thick underbrush attacked them from the left. Robertson's 3rd Arkansas Regiment began to take fire to their left flank. Two Federal regiments from Heg's 3rd Brigade, the 25th Illinois and 15th Wisconsin, were aggressively assaulting the Arkansans with rifle fire, protected behind a small rail fence. Immediately, Robertson halted the brigade and requested a change in front from BG Law. Law approved Robertson's request, but kept Benning and Sheffield on course, thus separating Robertson and Sheffield and creating a gap in the division's line. Robertson maneuvered his regiments to support Johnson's left flank and counter Heg's fire, now supported by the 38th Illinois Regiment from Brigadier General William Carlin's 2nd Brigade. Robertson's troops attacked and drove the Federals from the ditch, allowing

The Texas Brigade Changes Front 1530, 19 September

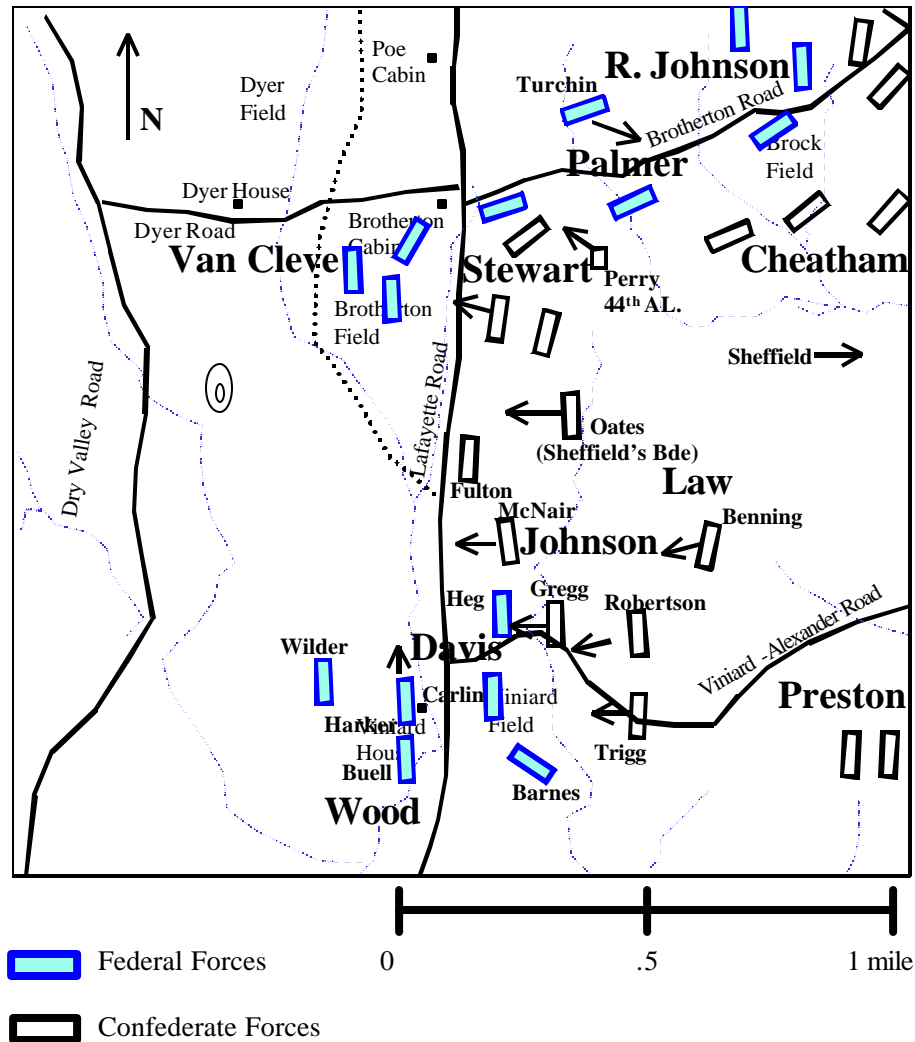


Figure 7. Texas Brigade changes front.

Gregg's troops to withdraw from the fight. Here, Robertson's men came under frontal fire from Heg's infantry, supported by the 38th Illinois, and bombarded from the right from Captain William Hotchkiss' 2nd Minnesota Light battery firing canister at 200 yards.¹³ The Texas Brigade rushed forward towards the Lafayette Road and closed with the enemy near the Viniard House. Though some of the Federals fled from their position, many remained behind the fences and engaged the Texans and Arkansans in fierce hand-to-hand combat before withdrawing to their rear.

The fighting shifted toward the Viniard House and Farm, where the Federals had fought back Bushrod Johnson's previous attacks, but at a cost. The day's battle had taken a toll on Heg's and Carlin's troops, and their ranks were depleted. However, the Federals had not planned to give up the defense so easily. Earlier, Brigadier General Thomas Wood, 1st Division, Crittenden's XXIst Corps, realized the Davis needed support and directed his 1st Brigade, under the command of Colonel George Buell, to form a battle line on Lafayette Road behind Carlin. Buell deployed his troops in two lines parallel to the road to confront the Confederate assault. From there, Buell's troops held the ground north and west of the Viniard's farm, with open fields of fire ideal to engage their enemy's advance. Buell also brought four light guns from Wood's divisional artillery, most likely the 8th Indiana Light Artillery, and placed them in the center of his formation.

Robertson's Brigade charged Heg's and Carlin's positions near the log house a second time. However, this charge forced most of Heg's and Carlin's men to run west, seeking the protective fire of Wilder's Spencer rifles. Robertson charge was bold, but

costly. He lost his regimental commanders of the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas regiments to wounds they received during the charge.¹⁴

The driven Federals left several pieces of artillery and fell back to a line of timber a quarter of a mile west of Lafayette Road.¹⁵ Unable to sustain the fight against the superior Federal numbers and firepower, Robertson's men were forced to withdraw from their position back toward the main Confederate line. As they slowly fell back through the farm and beyond the position from which they had previously driven the Federals, Robertson's troops again came under heavy, accurate artillery fire from the guns and repeating rifles of Wilder's mounted infantry brigade.¹⁶ Wilder's infantry pursued the Texans during their retreat. In desperation, Robertson's troops turned about and drove the Federal forces from their barricaded position for the second time. Robertson, now wanting to hold onto the only high ground in the Viniard Field, sent for artillery and infantry to support. He would not receive the artillery support, but did receive support from Benning's infantry.¹⁷

Benning had been out of the fight most of the day. Law kept the Georgians at bay, waiting for the decisive moment of the division's engagement to employ them. When Robertson's request for artillery support reached him, and with no artillery supporting the division, all Law could send were Benning's troops.¹⁸ Between 1545 and 1600, Law directed the "Rock" Brigade, under Benning's command, to advance 200 yards in support of Robertson against the what remained of Davis' troops and Buell's men defending terrain parallel to the western side of Lafayette Road.¹⁹

Benning's troops advanced forward to within 100 yards of the Viniard House.²⁰ There, he readied his forces for the assault in conjunction with Robertson, supporting the

Viniard Field
1600
19 September 1863

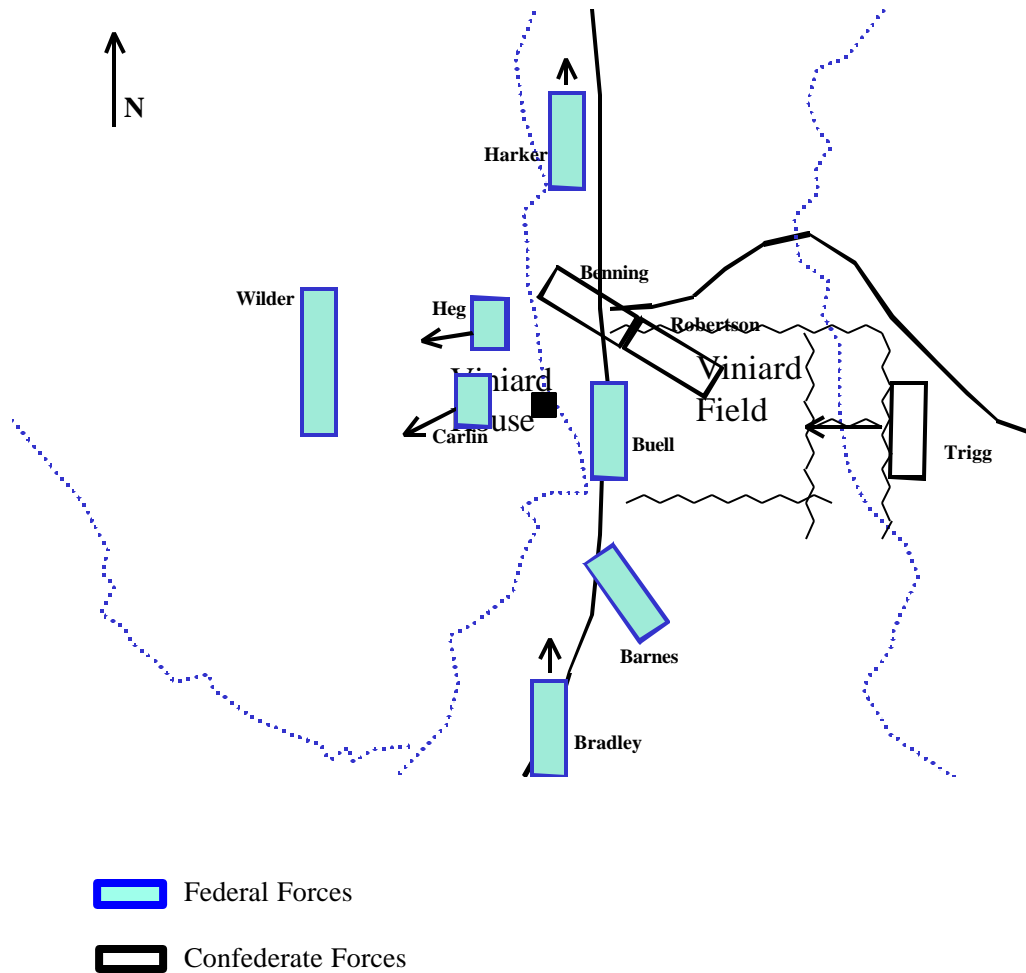


Figure 8. Viniard Field, 1600, 19 September 1863.

latter's left flank with the 15th Georgia Regiment, under the command of Colonel DuBose. Together, the Georgians and Texans assaulted the Federal defenses. Benning's forces crossed the road, through intense rifle fire and artillery shelling, taking cover in the western ditch adjacent to Lafayette Road.

The fighting was brutal. The battlefield was filled with smoke, confusion and fear. The bodies of dead Federal and Confederate men lay upon the ground, creating psychological obstacles for Benning's men to negotiate during the advance. Sergeant W. R. Houghton described the scene in a poem from his recollections:

E'en as they fell in files they lay, Like mowers grass at close of day.²¹

Nevertheless, the Georgians fought ferociously through the Federal battle zone, and with the Texans, rolled over the Federals, securing the ground around the Viniard house.²²

During the assault, Benning was grazed across his chest by a mini-ball, and had his horse shot from under him. Though shaken, and with the belief that reinforcements were on the way, Benning rallied his troops, directing them to establish hasty defensive positions to hold off the Federal counterattacks.

The remnants of Heg's troops, inflicted with heavy losses, withdrew to positions behind Wilder's brigade. Buell's troops, too, began to withdraw for the same reason. While Benning and Robertson were victorious in expelling the Federal forces from the Viniard farm, they found themselves isolated and vulnerable. Repeatedly, they requested support of artillery and reinforcements, but none was allocated.²³ Porter Alexander's guns had yet arrived from Virginia, and the guns from Bragg's Reserve Artillery were not available due to other requirements.

Benning's position was untenable. A section of Federal artillery from Captain Eli Lilly's 18th Indiana Battery, began to rain shells and canister upon Benning's defenses. He was literally pinned down, unable to muster an advance to silence the guns. At first, they were able to maintain their position, but the cannon fires were unbearable, forcing Benning to retrograde back across the Lafayette Road.²⁴ The fighting cost Benning dearly. In the 20th Georgia Regiment alone, he lost seventeen of his twenty-three officers.

For nearly two hours, Robertson's and Benning's Brigades managed to fend off repeated assaults from Federal forces. They fought remnants of Heg's Brigade, now commanded by Colonel John Martin, Colonel Luther Bradley's Brigade, and Buell's troops. Bradley's troops, from 3rd Brigade, Major General Philip Sheridan's 3rd Division, McCook's XXth Corps, were moving north with the rest of Sheridan's division when his brigade was ordered into the fight to support Buell's left flank after Heg's and Carlin's troops made a run for safety behind Wilder. Martin assumed command of Heg's Brigade when the latter fell mortally wounded during Benning's initial assault. Robertson and Benning held their position until nearly 1810 hours, sunset, but they were bloody and exhausted. After three requests for artillery support went unanswered, the two brigades were ordered by Law to withdraw their commands under cover of darkness 150 yards east of the Lafayette Road.²⁵ Both commanders believed they could have decimated the Federal forces severely had such support been available to them.²⁶

When Robertson changed front at 1530, he separated himself from Sheffield, who continued his course westward. Robertson's maneuver left Sheffield's southern flank

Hood's Division General Situation 1630, 19 September

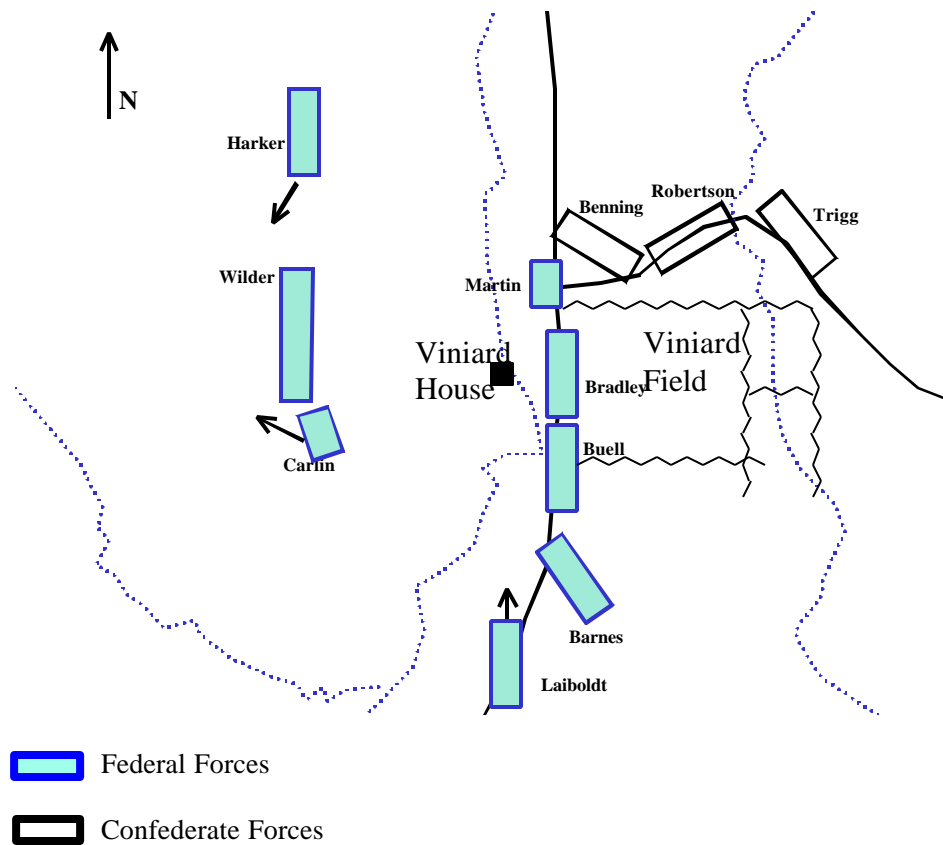


Figure 9. General Situation, 1630, 19 September 1863.

unsupported. The Alabamians advanced nearly 200 yards westward when they came upon Confederate troops, remnants from Stewart's Division, lying in the undergrowth.²⁷ Stewart's troops, physically spent and in need of ammunition, cheered the boys from Alabama on as they surged forward.

Around 1600, having advanced no more than a few yards in the undergrowth, the brigade's right front experienced a most destructive volley of rifle fire into their ranks from the Federal troops of Major General Joseph Reynolds' 4th Division, Major General George Thomas' XIVth Corps. On the brigade's right flank, the 44th Alabama, under the command of Colonel William F. Perry, attempted to charge Reynolds' troops as they were reloading. However, Perry's lines became so disorganized, to the extent of nearly breaking, that all his men could do was to lie in the underbrush, behind what cover they could find, and return fire. Fifteen minutes later, when the Federal fire began to subside, the 44th charged again, successfully driving the Federals from their position.

The disorganized charge separated the 44th from the rest of the brigade. Perry realized that the separation left his regiment unsupported, and yelled repeatedly for his troops to halt, but to no avail. As his regiment continued the attack, they met the one thing that could stop them: an unseen Federal artillery battery. The firepower of the canister shot stopped the 44th's advance and sent them back disorganized. Perry attempted to reorganize his troops, however, his age (forty years) and fatigued condition made it difficult for him to keep up with his troops. He could not catch up with his retreating regiment to rally them. The regiment was spread across the battlefield and Perry, without a mount, jumped upon a mobile limber to catch them.²⁸ Perry's transport had him retreating faster than his men.

As the regiment was retreating, Law had moved forward to assess his old brigade's progress. He witnessed the 44th's retreat and the unusual manner that Perry was attempting to regain control. Irritated, Law intervened and ceased the retreat, ordered the regimental major to gather his troops and reform. The 44th's day of fighting for the 19th had ended.

The Federal volley that placed the 44th in disarray also affected the 4th Alabama Regiment, separating a small band of forty to fifty men. This band of Alabamians began to intertwine with the Tennessee regiments of Colonel William Bate from Stewart's Division. Bate absorbed the band and injected them into his fight farther north. This detachment would spend the remainder of the day fighting with the men from Tennessee until they rejoined the 4th Alabama at day's end.

As other regiments of Alabamians continued to march forward, Sheffield, commanding the brigade, was thrown from his horse when an exploding artillery shell spooked the mare. Sheffield injured his back and was removed from the field. Perry, the next ranking officer in the brigade, assumed command. However, Perry was preoccupied with the 44th, and unaware that he was now in command of the brigade. Thus, the command of the brigade fell upon Colonel William C. Oates of the 15th Alabama. Oates was unaware that he was in command until a member of Law's staff informed him of Sheffield's injury, Perry's debacle, and his orders from Law to assume command of the brigade.²⁹

Oates, now commanding the Alabama Brigade, led its remaining regiments, 15th, 47th, 48th, and the remainder of the 4th, through the arduous terrain toward Lafayette Road. Oates crossed the road into a field at a point approximately 300 yards south of the

Brotherton House and halted the brigade because he failed to see any Federal units. To his left, about 100 yards, he could see Fulton's Brigade engaged with Federal troops. Fulton's troops were hit from the rear and being routed by Harker's Brigade of Federal troops, who gained an advantage on Fulton's right flank, firing with devastating effects that forced the Confederates to withdraw to the east of Lafayette Road.

Oates ordered the Alabama Brigade to orient towards the Harker's Federal troops attacking Fulton, and marched to their support. Harker's troops, alerted to Oates' initial assault, advanced and assaulted the Alabamians.³⁰ The Federals delivered an enfilading fire into Oates' ranks and the Alabamians began taking losses. With Federal troops now separating the Alabama Brigade from the other Confederate forces, Oates ordered the brigade back east across Lafayette Road.³¹ The movement across the road became disorganized as the Alabamians raced back to safety east of the road. On the east side of Lafayette Road, Oates reestablished control of the brigade.

Oates did not see Federals to his front or fellow Confederates to his flanks. He feared that he had separated from the bulk of the division. With no other Confederate troops in sight, no distinct terrain to provide protection or concealment, and the fear of isolation from the division, Oates ordered his brigade to retire.³² The time was nearly 1715. His weary troops bivouacked in the woods about 400 yards east of Lafayette Road.

The first day of the Battle of Chickamauga ended with severe casualties suffered by both sides, but with few gains for either army. Though Confederate forces temporarily occupied a few parcels of the Lafayette Road, to include elements of Hood's Division, Bragg had failed to obtain possession of the road and isolate Rosecrans from

Chattanooga. Likewise, Rosecrans had failed to drive Bragg back across the Chickamauga. Thus the day's battle could be considered a stalemate.

Losses in the Hood's Division were high. Though actual casualty numbers in Robertson's Brigade may have been reported, none could be found. Benning claims to have experienced great losses as well, however only the report of officer losses within the 20th Georgia is documented.³³ Also, the losses in the Alabama brigade were not found, but one would presume that their losses were not as great as the other two brigades.

During the night of 19 September, Hood's Division bivouacked approximately 1/2 mile northeast of the Viniard House and Lafayette Road. Law ordered temporary breastworks built and placed his division at 33 percent security. In the bivouacs, while awaiting direction from Hood for the next day's fight, Law had the division make their preparations. He made his way to the brigades to check on the troops and converse with their commanders. The troops, hungry and weary from the day's fighting, rested upon their weapons and prepared biscuits from a ration of rice flour.³⁴

At midnight, Colonel Perry, after a most trying day, arrived with 44th Alabama Regiment. Oates relinquished the command to Perry, the brigade's senior colonel.³⁵ The Alabamians, who had not eaten in twenty-four hours, finally received their rations at 0100 on the 20th. The troops awoke to eat their share.³⁶ Perry and Oates discussed the day's events, which Perry told Oates of the limber ride he took, witnessed by Law.³⁷ At Oates suggestion, Perry went to Law's headquarters to seek a resolution to the issue with Law. He attempted to explain his actions to Law, but to no avail. Perry, dejected, returned to the brigade's bivouac site convinced that Law did not understand Perry's actions.³⁸ That night, Perry and Oates shared a blanket as they slept.³⁹

During the night, the Federal forces built breastworks to protect the Lafayette Road and shortened their defensive lines to a width of three miles.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Longstreet and two more brigades of Lafayette McLaws' Division, Joseph Kershaw's and Benjamin Humphrey's brigades, arrived from Virginia to augment the Confederate forces.⁴¹

Bragg's frustration was growing. He believed the Army of Tennessee was fighting an inferior force under Rosecrans' leadership, but the battle on 19 September 1863 had not proved to be so. Basically, his army fought to a stalemate. He needed a simple plan for the next day. Bragg now divided his army into two wings, with Longstreet in command of the left wing and Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk in command of the right. He had seen this technique used previously at the Battle of Stones River. In theory, this technique simplified the command and control requirements and allows greater initiative to the wing commanders. When dawn broke on the 20th, Bragg expected the attack to be renewed with a right-to-left echelon strategy.⁴² His intent was to push Rosecrans' right flank south toward Longstreet's left wing and attack with a massive force, defeating the Army of the Cumberland and cutting the Federals off from its supply routes and lines of communication from Chattanooga.

¹W. R. Houghton and M. Houghton, *Two Boys in the Civil War and After*, (Montgomery, AL: The Paragon Press, 1912), 140.

²O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 228-229, and Part II, 11-18. Bragg, with not all of his commanders and units present yet, created a provisional division under the command of Bushrod Johnson. John Gregg's Brigade came from Major General W.H.T. Walker's Division, Lieutenant General Daniel H. Hill's Corps; Evander McNair's Brigade from Major General Simon B. Buckner's Corps; and Johnson's Brigade from Major General Alexander P. Stewart's Division, Buckner's Corps.

³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 31.

⁴Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 334.

⁵Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 113.

⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 453; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 336.

⁷Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 336.

⁸O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 18.

⁹Huntsville *Daily Confederate*, 17 October 1863.

¹⁰O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 498-499, and Part II, 453-454; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 340.

¹¹Simpson, *Gaines' Mill to Appomattock*, 158.

¹²O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 454-455.

¹³*Ibid*, 513-514; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 341.

¹⁴O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511.

¹⁵*Ibid*, 511, 513-514; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 342.

¹⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 448.

¹⁷O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511, 513-514; 516. Dameron, 56-57.

¹⁸O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 518; Dameron, 57.

¹⁹Houghton and Houghton, 140; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 221.

²⁰*Southern Historical Society Papers, 1876-1910*, (Richmond, VA: The Society), Vol 16, 384.

²¹Houghton and Houghton, 140.

²²O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 518; Dameron, 57; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 222.

²³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 518; Dameron, 57.

²⁴O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 448, Part II, 518; Dameron, 57; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 225.

²⁵O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511, 513-514, 516, 518; Dameron, 56-57.

²⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511, 518; Dameron, 56-57.

²⁷William C. Oates, "General W. F. Perry and Something of His Career in War and Peace", *Montgomery Advertiser*, 2 March 1902, 6; Laine & Penny, 148.

²⁸William C. Oates, "General W. F. Perry and Something of His Career in War and Peace", 6; Laine & Penny, 148.

²⁹William C. Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, (New York and Washington, D.C.: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 254.

³⁰Charles T. Clark, *The Opdycke Tigers, 125th O.V.I.*, (Columbus, OH: Spahr and Glenn, 1895), 92-95.

³¹Oates, *War*, 254.

³²Oates, *War*, 255.

³³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 518; Dameron, 56-57.

³⁴Laine & Penny, 156.

³⁵Oates, *War*, 255; Oates, "General W. F. Perry and Something of His Career...", 7; Laine & Penny, 156.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Laine & Penny, 156.

³⁸Oates, *War*, 255; Oates, "General W. F. Perry and Something of His Career...", 7; Laine & Penny, 156.

³⁹Oates, "General W. F. Perry and Something of His Career...", 7; Laine & Penny, 156.

⁴⁰Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 344.

⁴¹Longstreet, 439.

⁴²Boatner, 151-152.

CHAPTER 4

BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA: 20 SEPTEMBER 1863

Go ahead, and keep ahead of everything.¹

John B. Hood, 20 September 1863

During the evening of 19 September, General Rosecrans withdrew his forces in the north, to defensive positions along a small ridge to the east of Lafayette Road. On his right flank in the south, the Federal forces established defensive lines west of the road. Rosecrans knew Bragg's intent was to renew the attack the next day.

Bragg's battle plan for the 20th was simple. It dictated a dawn attack by his right wing against the Federal left and push Rosecrans troops south towards Longstreet's forces. Longstreet, commanding Bragg's left wing, was to attack upon hearing the battle begin on the southern end of the right wing's line. Bragg believed his plan would defeat the Federals and cut their routes to Chattanooga.

At first light on September 20, the Texas Brigade was formed in battle lines about 3/4 mile northeast of the Viniard House and the Lafayette Road. Shortly afterwards, the brigade was ordered to march north, and slightly to the right, about 1/2 mile to a new attack position.² Hood's temporary corps now contained three divisions, with Johnson's Division arranged along his frontage. Buckner's two divisions of Major General A.P. Stewart and Major General William Preston supported Longstreet's right and left flanks, respectively. Major General T. C. Hindman's Division was positioned along Longstreet's frontage between Preston's and Johnson's divisions. Law's Division was aligned to the rear, east of Johnson's Division. McLaws' Division of two brigades, Kershaw's and Humphrey's, under Kershaw's command, were posted in the rear as a reserve. Law had

Array of Hood's Division 1100 20 September 1863

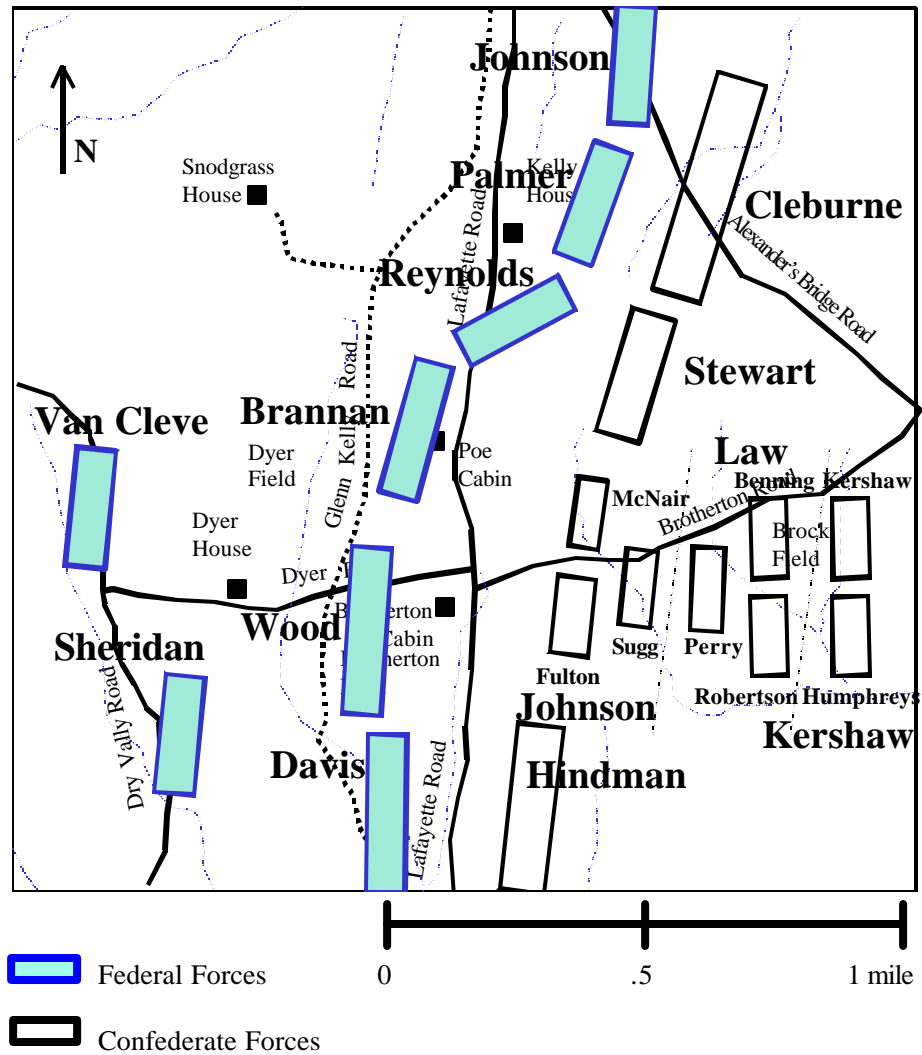


Figure 10. Array of Hood's Division, 1100, 20 September 1863.

arranged his division in a triangular formation, with his own brigade in front, and Robertson and Benning to the left and right, respectively.³ These two support brigades lay 300-400 yards behind the Alabama Brigade, now under the command of Colonel W. F. Perry (figure 10).⁴

Perry arrayed the Alabama Brigade with the regiments of, from left to right, 15th Alabama, 4th Alabama, 47th Alabama, 48th Alabama, and 44th Alabama, respectively. When Perry assumed command of the brigade, he, like Sheffield preceding him, left his staff with the regiment. Thus, the tasks of planning, reporting, and issuing orders fell solely on Perry's shoulders.⁵

The Confederate attack was not proceeding as Bragg had planned. There was no dawn attack. Confusion within Polk's command on the right wing delayed the Confederate attack until 0930. Bragg's impatience grew and at 1100, he sent orders for a general attack. Soon after, Longstreet ordered the advance of his left wing. Likewise, Hood ordered all his divisions in the column forward simultaneously toward the Lafayette Road.⁶ Hood's column advanced rapidly to its front. This unusually rapid advancement was due to a Federal blunder in which Rosecrans had ordered Major General Thomas Wood's Division to move from the right to the center of the Federal line about the same time that Hood launched the attack.⁷ Eight Confederate brigades, including the three from Hood's Division, poured through the resulting 1/2 mile gap in the Federal line.

Johnson's Division, leading Hood's column, crossed Lafayette Road, passing south of the Brotherton Cabin, striking the right flank of Colonel George Buell's column

The Break Through 1110-1130 20 September 1863

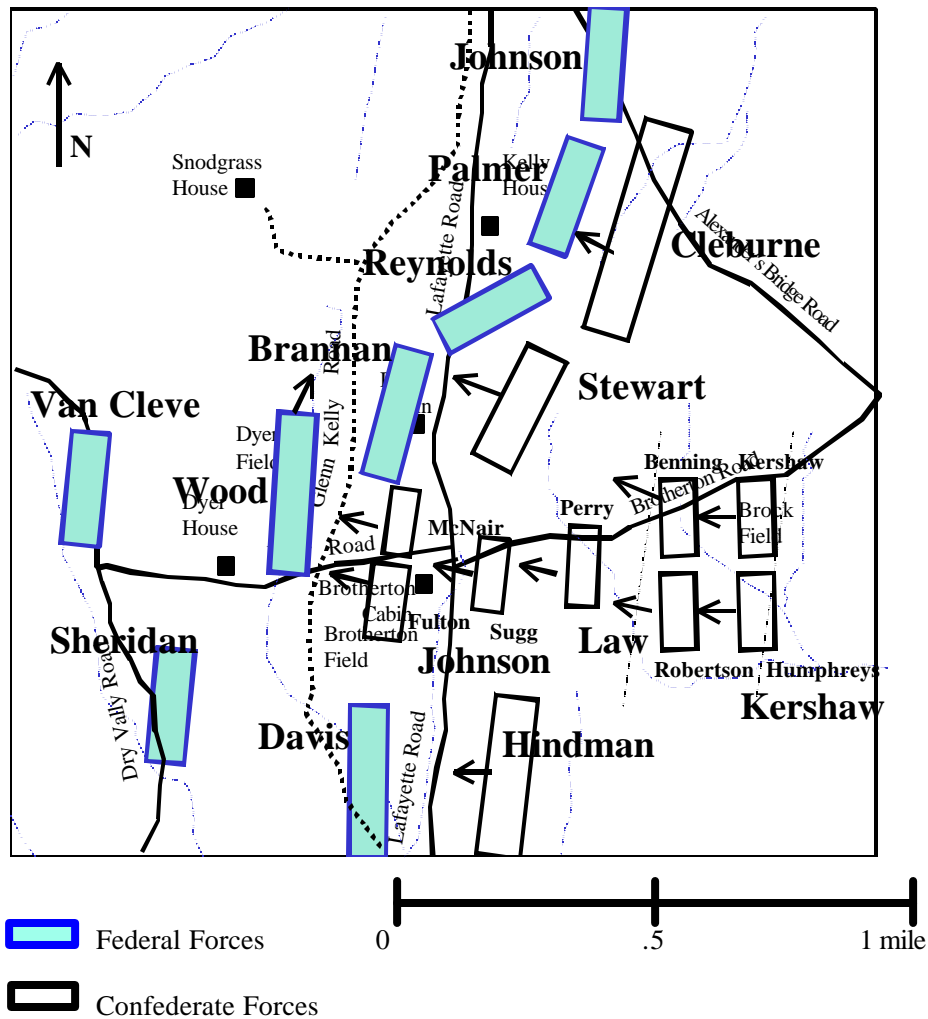


Figure 11. The Break Through, 1110-1130, 20 September 1863.

of Federal troops (figure 11). Buell's brigade was moving northwestward as ordered by Brigadier General Thomas Wood, commander of the 1st Division, XXIst Corps, to close up on Major General Joseph Reynolds's 4th Division, XIVth Corps, and support him.⁸ Johnson's troops surprised Buell, forcing the latter to retreat. Johnson's success continued as his division rapidly advanced a distance of nearly a mile, with Fulton's Brigade reaching the southern slopes at the base of a spur extending 1/4 to 1/2 miles south of the Horseshoe Ridge.

Hood's Division in the Dyer Field

Law, executing Hood's order, in turn ordered his entire division forward and Perry's Brigade, initially, supported with artillery on their left flank from Dent's Alabama Battery from Hindman's Division, moved ahead at a steady pace. The batteries of Porter Alexander were still on the trains in Wilmington, North Carolina, and were not present for the battle on the 20th.

The best account of the forward advance of Hood's column is Perry's description years later after the battle:

Eleven o'clock had passed, and twelve had nearly come, when the command "attention" rang down our lines. In a moment the lounging soldiers were in their places, and, in another came the order "forward march." For some distance the movement was slow and steady. Then by degrees, it became a quickstep, and then a double quick, and at length, a wild and impetuous rush. It seemed like a resistless tidal wave.⁹ Everything was swept before it; if, indeed, there was anything to sweep.

Perry, without a staff to support him, experienced much difficulty maintaining his brigade in battle lines.¹⁰ The Alabamians struggled as they followed Bushrod Johnson's Division into the battle.

Perry's Alabamians veered right, crossing the Lafayette Road at a point north of the Brotherton House. Perry identified Federal units from Colonel John Connell's 1st Brigade, Brigadier General John Brannon's 3rd Division, Thomas' XIVth Corps, supported by Captain Josiah Church's Battery D, 1st Michigan Light Artillery from Colonel Connell's 1st Brigade, forming to attack his right flank. The remainder of Perry's Brigade, surprised by their uncontested advance, became excited and instinctively marched at the double quick-step towards the sound of the battle into the woods north of the Brotherton House.¹¹ Perry, believing the Federal force was not an immediate threat, dispatched the 44th Alabama Regiment to confront them. The rifle fire of the 44th Alabama forced the Federals to change front. Benning's Brigade wheeled to the 44th Alabama's right flank and the enemy's attention turned towards the Georgians. It is not known if the 44th was given direction from Benning in its fight. What is known is that the 44th advanced no further, succumbing to the cannon fire of Church's artillery. The 44th fell back and spent the remainder of the day battling Federal units venturing into its sector, protected by the woods east of Dyer field.

Perry's three remaining Alabama regiments (4th, 47th, and 48th) continued forward towards Dyer Field. Under Perry's command, the Alabamians followed McNair's Brigade through the open cropland of Dyer Field towards a ridge, free of timber, extending north to south from a spur of Horseshoe Ridge. This spur was a series of five hilltops and saddles that came to be known as Horseshoe Ridge after the battle. Deployed on the ridge were five Federal artillery batteries (8th Indiana Light Artillery; H Battery, 4th U. S. Artillery; 3rd Wisconsin Light Artillery; 26th Pennsylvania Light Artillery; and the 7th Indiana Light Artillery) with twenty-six cannons from Crittenden's

XXIst Corps, consolidated under the direction of Crittenden's Chief of Artillery, Major John Mendenhall.¹²

Forward of Perry's advance, McNair's Brigade was engaged by devastating Federal cannon fire. A shell fragment wounded McNair, devolving the command of his brigade upon Colonel David Coleman, commander of the 39th North Carolina Regiment. The cannon barrage pinned Coleman's men down and stalled their advance, sending its troops scurrying to find cover. Perry ordered an artillery section to unlimber and begin to fire upon the Federal batteries on the ridge. Initially, the Confederate counter fires were effective, but Mendenhall directed the Wisconsin battery to concentrate their fires upon the small section of Confederate artillerists.¹³ The artillery duel had begun, but neither opponent was effective. The Federals were able to keep the Alabamians' heads down, reducing their ability to engage with effective musket volleys.

The 47th Alabama commander, Captain Eli Clower, knew the Federal guns had to be silenced and ordered the regiment to charge the Federal position. The men of McNair's Brigade were motivated by the Alabamians courageous assault and joined in the charge across the field towards the Federal guns on the ridge.¹⁴

The Federals attempted to repel the Confederate assault, but their efforts were in vain. Clower's and Coleman's efforts fixed the Federals' attention. Then Perry ordered his two remaining regiments to join the assault. Sugg's men also joined the assault, and were able to surge through the right flank and rear of the Federal line.¹⁵ Sugg's troops shot the limbered horses and assaulted the Federal line, capturing a few cannons along the way. Perry and Sugg mopped up the remainder of the Federal gun positions, capturing fifteen of the twenty-six guns.

After securing the federal guns, Perry turned his attention to a Federal infantry column to his right. He intended to reorganize his three remaining Alabama regiments and assault the Federal column. However, he found his regiments in disarray, excited by their successful assault upon the Federal gun line. Perry aborted the intended assault.

Robertson's Brigade followed the Alabamians during the initial advance along Brotherton Road and through the broken, wooded country, nearly a mile, taking artillery fire along most of the route. After breaking into the Dyer clearing, Robertson identified a strong Federal force of infantry and artillery, from Harker's brigade, posted on a wooded hill to their right front. The Texas Brigade immediately wheeled to the right and attacked the enemy force positioned on the forward slope of the hill, but Robertson's movement exposed both of his flanks. Nevertheless, the Texans pushed forward at the quick step, firing as they went. With accurate and heavy fire, Robertson's troops drove the Federals from the hill, and caused them to retreat in disorder to a second ridge a short distance to the west.¹⁶ From their secondary position, the Federals reorganized and were able to maintain a steady rate of fire against Robertson's command.

From his vulnerable position, Robertson requested support for both his exposed flanks. Unlike the previous day, however, no infantry support was available.¹⁷ Robertson soon determined his position was not defensible when both his flanks were fired upon.¹⁸ Facing fire from three directions, Robertson had no choice but to withdraw quickly from the crossfire and take cover in a grove of woods nearby. Several members of the brigade, including Robertson, were convinced the flanking fire had come from Confederate units.¹⁹ If so, this was understandable, given Robertson's advanced position and the blue-

Hood's Division 1300 20 September 1863

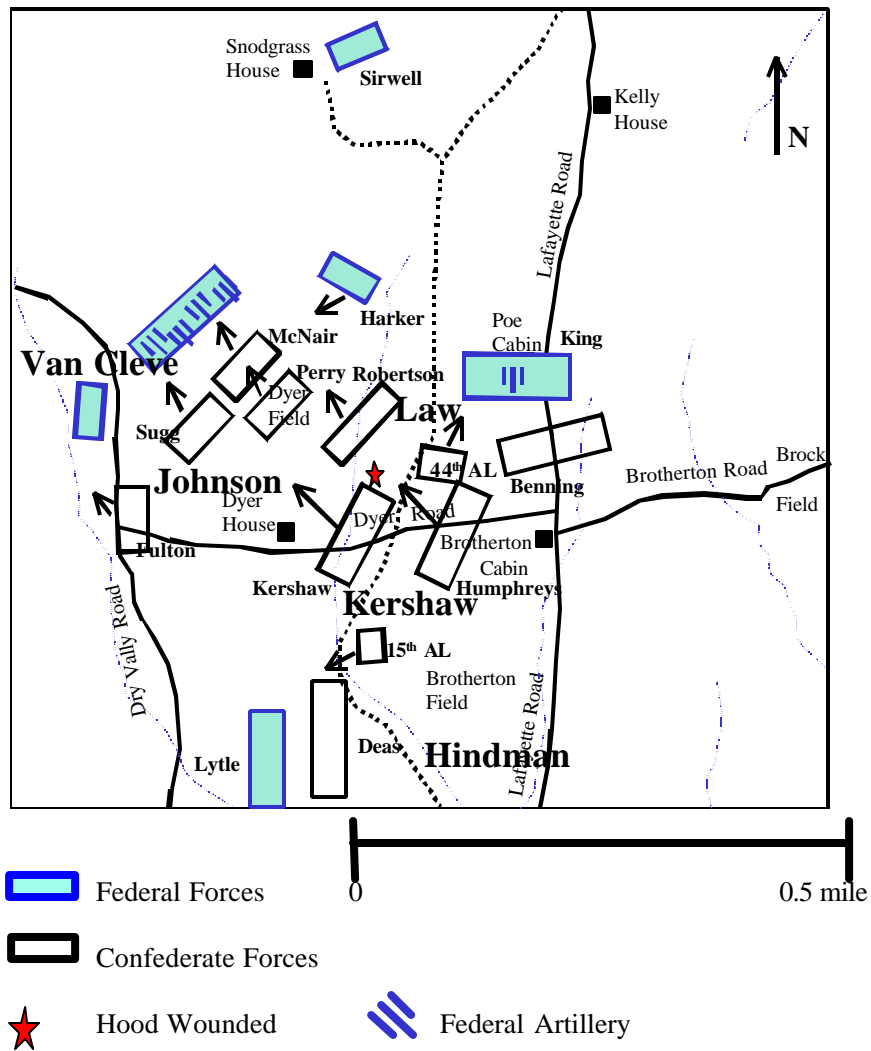


Figure 12. Hood's Division, 1300, 20 September 1863.

gray kersey uniforms his men had been wearing, issued to most of the division in August while camped near Fredericksburg.²⁰

From a short distance, Colonel Perry saw his sister brigade falling back and badly wanted to go to their assistance. However, with his Alabama regiments still disorganized, and flanks exposed, he could not go their support. Rather, he followed the Texans back towards the woods east of the Dyer field.

As the Texas Brigade and Alabamians withdrew from their positions in some confusion, Hood happened to be riding by as he was directing the advance of his command. He saw his old brigade of Texans withdrawing and attempted to rally them. He immediately rode over to the grove where the Texans were reorganizing. As Hood and Robertson were conversing in front of the woods, a minie ball struck Hood in the upper part of his right thigh, splintering the bone. Hood fell from his horse amongst the troops of his old brigade.²¹ Several Texans, who witnessed the shooting, thought that the shot came from the same friendly troops, which had been firing upon them before.²² Hood's fighting at Chickamauga had culminated. He was carried from the field and his leg was amputated shortly after. Hood's last order at Chickamauga was given to Bushrod Johnson, when the latter had reached the Dyer House during the initial break through. Hood's order was simply:

"Go ahead, and keep ahead of everything."²³

By mid-afternoon the Texas Brigade and Perry's Alabamians were ordered, by Law, to move from their positions in the timber and to erect a barricade of logs and rails in their immediate front.²⁴ Robertson's command remained there under sporadic fire until 1700, when it was ordered to the vicinity of Horseshoe Ridge. At dark, Robertson's

Brigade relieved Brigadier General Archibald Gracie's Brigade, Preston's Division, in the front lines and remained on alert until the last of the Federal forces had retreated to Chattanooga.²⁵

Benning's Georgians

When the division advanced, Benning's Brigade advanced in support of Perry. Shortly after their advance, Benning detected a Federal column to his right front assaulting the right flank of Perry's troops in the woods near the Poe house.²⁶ Benning immediately ordered his brigade to wheel right to support and confront the threat from Colonel John Croxton's 2nd Brigade, and elements of Colonel Connell's 1st Brigade, both of Brannan's 3rd Division. Suddenly, the Federals turned their attention and guns towards Benning's advancing troops. The Federal firepower, from Lieutenant Marco Gary's Battery C, 1st Ohio Light Artillery, of Croxton's 2nd Brigade, was as ferocious as the cannon fire experienced by Benning's troops in the Viniard Field the previous day. Gary's artillery fire pushed Benning's troops backward, requiring the Georgians to seek what cover they could behind trees and rocks. The initial assault threw Benning from his horse and forced him to also seek the safety of the trees. From his position behind a tree, Benning attempted to rally his units for a counterattack to drive the enemy from the field. "Rock" ordered his brigade to charge the breastworks, fortified during the previous night, in front of the Gary's Federal cannon. The Georgians charged, dislodging their enemy from their positions and capturing six cannons. One piece may have come from Gary's Battery, but the other five pieces most likely came from Captain Church's Battery D, 1st Michigan Light Artillery, overran by the 44th Alabama Regiment's earlier assault against

Colonel Connell's troops, and not secured by the Alabamians. Regardless, Benning's Brigade now had 6 cannons for their use, and the Federals were driven back.

Hastily, Benning's troops continued in pursuit of Brannan's troops. However, rather than engaging the fleeing men from Croxton's brigade, Benning's Georgians ran into the right flank of Reynolds' 4th Division, where elements of Colonel Edward King's 2nd Brigade were positioned. The Georgians began successfully rolling up King's flank when they were counterattacked by Reynolds' reserve, the 105th Ohio Regiment. The regiment of Ohioans assaulted Benning's unprotected right flank, sending the surprised Georgians back from whence they came.

The effects of the battlefield exacerbated Benning's troops. The confusion of battle, heat of the day, thirst, thick smoke and dense woods along with the deafening sounds of the fight, consumed the Georgians. Even Benning became disoriented, believing his brigade had been destroyed. Hastily, he cut a horse loose from the previously captured cannon and rode to find Law to report. En route, Benning met Longstreet and reported:

my horse killed, my brigade torn to pieces, and I haven't a man left.'²⁷

Benning continued, asking Longstreet for instructions. After Longstreet calmed him down, he told him that he could find at least one man in his command to lead.²⁸ Longstreet's words were soothing and Benning collected himself, regained his composure and returned to his command.

Benning assessed the condition of his brigade. With his ranks depleted and needing ammunition, along with the human elements of fatigue, thirst, and hunger, Benning determined his troops could advance no further. He assembled his regiments in a

defensive perimeter around the captured artillery pieces. Here he reorganized his brigade in preparation for future support they might be able to provide, if so ordered. The Georgians' day of fighting was over, and a small fight it was.

15th Alabama Regiment

As Perry veered right, north of the Brotherton House, the 15th Alabama Regiment separated from the brigade and continued to advance to the west rather than north. At a point nearly 300 yards across Lafayette Road, Oates realized that he was separated from the brigade, and halted his regiment to assess his situation.²⁹ In the distance to his left front, at the base of the ridge, southeast of the Dyer house nearly 200 yards, he saw a unit of Confederate troops engaged and in need of assistance. These were the troops of Colonel Samuel K. McSpadden's 19th Alabama Regiment, Deas' Brigade, Hindman's Division.³⁰

Oates ordered his regiment forward to assist his fellow Confederates. As the 15th Alabama advanced, they were subjected to heavy cannon shelling and rifle fires.³¹ Fighting through the artillery shelling and minie balls, the 15th maneuvered to positions at the base of a hill, which today is called Lytle Hill. Wounded in his hip by shell fragments during the advance, Oates, though in pain, maintained his composure and limped forward to lead his regiment.³²

At the base of the hill, Oates ordered the regiment to hold their fire until they had passed over the 19th Alabama, who were lying in the grassy field in their front. Oates, concerned about fratricide, wanted to ensure his troops had cleared the positions of their fellow Alabamians before engaging the Federals. However, in his report, Colonel McSpadden claimed that a number of his losses came from friendly fire from the 15th.³³

In the years after the war, Oates repeatedly disputed this accusation until his death in September 1910.

Stumbling over the troops from the 19th Alabama, the 15th Alabama Regiment assaulted to within eighty yards of the Federal lines, driving them back a short distance. After the somewhat disorganized assault, Oates regrouped his troops and had them deliver a coordinated volley amongst Federals to support Hindman's Division second assault. The coordinated attack forced the Federals to abandon their position and cannons, which the Confederates conveniently secured.

Around 1305, upon the apex of the hill, Oates organized the regiment into a hasty defense while he assessed the regiment's situation. The men in Oates' 15th Alabama Regiment rested in their positions on the hillside. They were spent, exhausted and thirsty. Oates allowed his men to rest as he went out to seek the rest of the Perry's Brigade. Shortly after his departure, Oates met Bushrod Johnson and asked the general if he knew the whereabouts of Perry's Brigade. Johnson informed Oates that he did not know where Perry's Brigade was fighting, but informed Oates of the fighting north of their present position.³⁵ Oates immediately suspended his search for Perry, and hurried back to gather his regiment. Oates intended to march his regiment to Johnson's position and support Johnson's troops.

Oates marched his regiment at the double-quick to the north across the Dyer field. At 1330, enroute to support Johnson, Oates encountered Lieutenant Colonel Bland of the 7th South Carolina Regiment from Kershaw's Brigade. Oates noticed a wide gap between Bland and his fellow South Carolinians of Colonel James Nance's 3rd Regiment.³⁶ Oates

Hood's Division 1330 20 September 1863

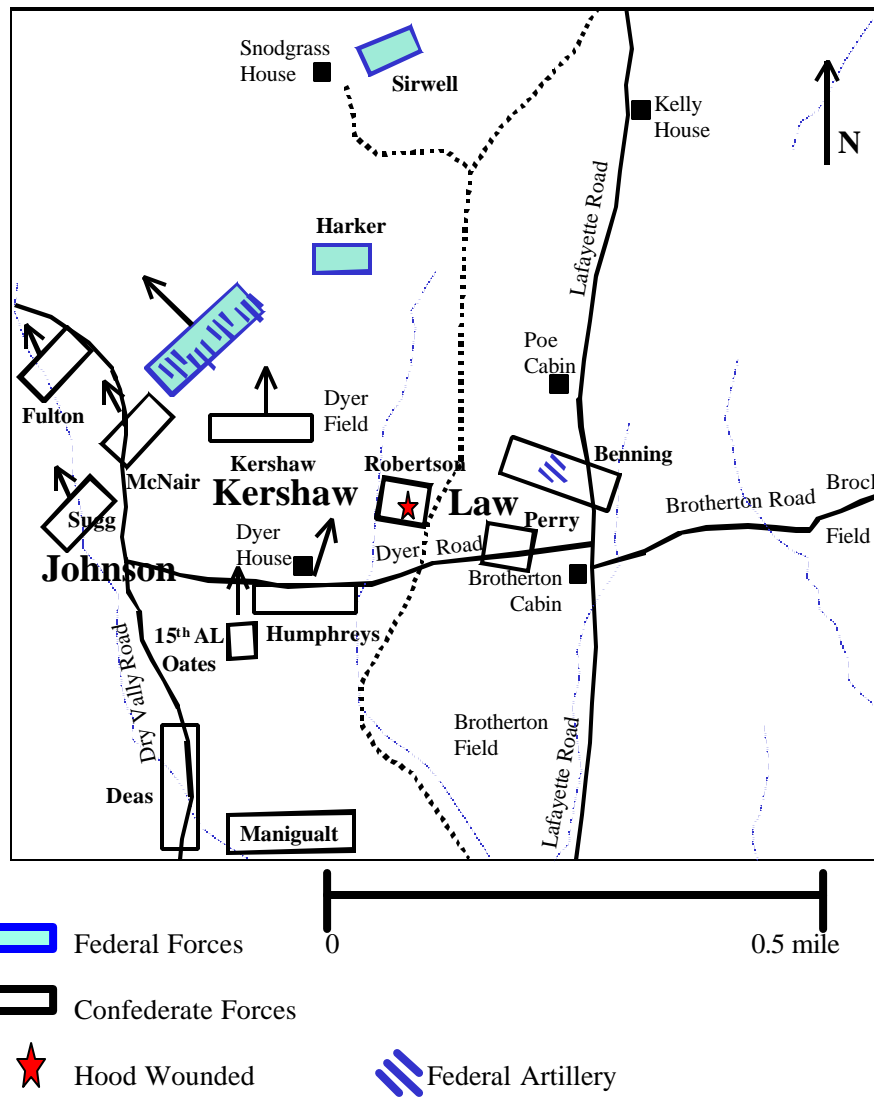


Figure 13. Hood's Division, 1330, 20 September 1863.

placed his regiment into the gap and advanced with the South Carolinians across a pasture toward the southeastern slope of Horseshoe Ridge, unbeknownst to Kershaw. However, when his regiment saw 3 regiments of Colonel Timothy Stanley's 2nd Brigade, Major General James Negley's 2nd Division, Thomas' XIVth Corps, counterattacking, the Alabamians scurried back down the slope.³⁷ Oates attempted to stop his regiment's withdrawal, running amongst them and yelling, "Halt, halt, men! About face and return to your position!"³⁸ Oates' commands had the desired effect. The Alabamians rallied together, but did not assault up the slope again. Rather, the men of the 15th Alabama established defenses in a ravine, at the base of the slope, and sent sporadic rifle fire in the direction Stanley's advancing troops, forcing them back up the slope. From their position in the ravine, Oates ordered his men to seek cover and build temporary breastworks. The 15th Alabama would fight for the remainder of the day with Kershaw's regiments around Horseshoe Ridge until the Federals retired from the battlefield. At 1900, an officer from Law's staff, who had been searching for the errant regiment for two hours, arrived and directed Oates to withdraw and rejoin Perry and the rest of the Alabama Brigade.³⁹

The Battle of Chickamauga was a clear Confederate tactical victory. Bragg's troops controlled the battlefield as the Federal forces retreated north to the safety of Rossville and Chattanooga. However, General Bragg's failure to actively pursue the retreating Federals allowed Rosecrans' troops to become securely entrenched around Chattanooga by 22 September 1863. Thus, the strategic advantage won by the tactical victory at Chickamauga was lost, and Bragg was forced to lay siege to Chattanooga and keep the pressure on the Federal Army.

Hood's Division spent September 21 and 22 on the battlefield gathering their wounded, burying their dead, and gathering supplies discarded by the fleeing Federals.⁴⁰ In the two days of fighting at Chickamauga, their losses were great. Of the original 4,500 troops from the division, an estimated 3000 remained, a 33.3 percent loss.⁴¹ The Texas Brigade lost 570 of about 1300 men, nearly 44 percent.⁴² The 4th and 5th Texas Regiments lost of their commanders and their second in command.⁴³ The 4th Texas number of ready troops was estimated at 150, present and effective. The estimates for 1st Texas was about 100, with the 5th Texas about the same. By process of elimination, the 3rd Arkansas had around 220. Colonel Van Manning's losses were not as great, most likely due to their relative inactivity on the 20th, being on the left flank of Robertson's advance. Benning's report listed his 133 casualties, when tabulated, however, his losses were closer to 500.⁴⁴ Perry's losses were not as great, with an estimated 407 killed, wounded, and missing, about 20 percent.

¹ O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 458. Hood's last command at Chickamauga was given to Bushrod Johnson.

²OR 511, 516

³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511, 518; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 345; Laine & Penny, 157.

⁴O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511, 518.

⁵New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Letter from Colonel W. F. Perry to Colonel E. Carman, 16 October 1893, Bowling Green, KY, *Ezra Ayers Carman Papers*, New York, NY. (Hereafter referred as Perry to Carman)

⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II 303, 363, 457, 511.

⁷O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 402; Simpson, *The History of Hood's Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 346.

⁸O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I 635; Cozzens, 361; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 346; Laine & Penny, 161.

⁹Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Colonel W.F. Perry’s account of the Battle of Chickamauga, 16 October 1893, Bowling Green, KY, *Ezra Ayers Carman Papers*, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter referred as Perry’s Account of the Battle of Chickamauga)

¹⁰Perry to Carman.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 44-45.

¹³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 85.

¹⁴Perry to Carman.

¹⁵O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 495.

¹⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part I, 402 and Part II, 511-512, 514-515; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 346.

¹⁷O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 346.

¹⁸O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 512-515; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 347; Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 63.

¹⁹O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 512, 514-515; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 347.

²⁰Sorrell, *Recollections*, 190; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 347.

²¹O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 512; Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 64.

²²Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 348.

²³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 458.

²⁴Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 348.

²⁵O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 417, 505, 512, 514-515, 517; Simpson, *‘The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 349.

²⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 518.

²⁷Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 448.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Oates, *War*, 256.

³⁰*Ibid*; Laine & Penny, 171.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Oates, *War*, 258.

³³Oates, *War*, 256; Laine Penny, 172.

³⁵Oates, *War*, 259; Laine & Penny, 172. Bushrod Johnson has no mention of meeting with Oates in his official report.

³⁶O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 504; Oates, *War*, 259; Cozzens, 426-427.

³⁷Oates, *War*, 261-262.

³⁸*Ibid*, 262.

³⁹*Ibid*, 264.

⁴⁰Simpson, “*The History of Hood’s Texas Brigade, 1861-1865*, 348.

⁴¹*Joseph Jones Papers*, Special collections, (Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.)

⁴²O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 291.

⁴³O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 511.

⁴⁴O.R., Series I, Vol 30, Part II, 517-519.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Hood's Division participated in the Confederate victory at Chickamauga, but its contributions toward the outcome were not significant. The leaders of Hood's Division struggled during the two days fighting at Chickamauga. During the battle, their lines tended to lose momentum as they progressed: brigades lost their organization, their commanders lost track of their regiments, and formations lost integrity when advancing. After initial assaults, units required regrouping prior to resuming the attack, provided they had not already suffered too severely in casualties. Additionally, the brigade commanders, and other leaders within the division, were unfamiliar with the terrain, only exacerbating the degradation of their brigades. Regardless, leadership was the one dynamic fundamental deficient in Hood's Division necessary to manage the increased confusion inherent on the battlefield.

Leadership is defined as the ability to influence people, by providing purpose, direction and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization. Leadership requires leaders to effectively communicate their purpose, direction, and motivations and competently exhibit the tactical and technical skills necessary to accomplish their assigned missions.¹ Most importantly, a leader must have character and integrity. I have concluded that the performance of Hood's Division was mediocre, and its leadership was the defining factor. The performances of the leadership in Hood's Division (Law, Robertson, Benning) exposed some deficiencies in their abilities to lead their units. Individually, each commander experienced successes and

failures when leading their men in battle at Chickamauga. An analysis of each leader's performance will explain why.

Major General John Bell Hood set the tone. He came to Chickamauga with high expectations from the leadership of the Army of Tennessee, and his reputation as a tenacious fighter preceded him. However, pre-conceived conclusions do not always turn out as expected. From the time Hood boarded the train at Richmond, until his debarkation at Catoosa Station, he was not the same man he was prior to Gettysburg. No longer was his style of leadership as audacious as it had once existed. Caution had been injected into his personality, and it was reflected in his decisions at Chickamauga. Whether it was the degradation of his physical capabilities or his mental psyche is speculative. Hood rarely wrote a report of his actions, or that of his command, during the numerous battles and engagements preceding Chickamauga. Mention of his leadership actions is also scarce in his the reports of his subordinates during these previous encounters.

An example of Hood's cautious approach was evident when Hood assumed control of Brigadier General Bushrod Johnson's advance on 18 September. Late that afternoon, Hood had the opportunity to exploit his superior numbers against Wilder's small force. However, Hood opted to disengage his troops and withdraw to establish defensive positions. Where was his offensive audacity? Hard fights and the darkness of night had not prevented his aggressive nature in the past. Perhaps the answer lies in his unfamiliarity with northern Georgia, his growing addiction to the laudanum, or lack of acquaintance with the resources available to him in the Army of Tennessee.

Unfortunately, Hood did not submit an official report of his, or his subordinate commanders', actions during the battles at Chickamauga. No solid evidence is present to

validate any significant actions or decisions that Hood made contributing to the Confederate success. However, Longstreet submitted a recommendation for Hood's promotion to Lieutenant General, based on Hood's actions at Chickamauga. On 24 September 1863, Longstreet writes to Bragg:

I respectfully recommend Major General J. B. Hood for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant General, for distinguished conduct and ability in the battle of the 20th inst. General Hood handled his troops with the coolness and ability that I have rarely known by any officer, on any field, and had the misfortune, after winning the battle, to lose one of his limbs.²

Though Bragg endorsed Longstreet's recommendation, I believe Hood's recommendation for promotion was out of pity, from his injuries at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, and a sense of obligation, on Longstreet's behalf.

Brigadier General Evander Law, reminiscent of Major General Hood, did not write official reports, and one can only derive speculative conclusions of his performance at Chickamauga. It is curious that Law did not write more extensively and in depth about the Battle of Chickamauga. After the war, he was a newspaper editor and active participant in Confederate groups, yet he left no written papers.³

An analysis of Law's performance, through limited accounts, concludes Law was not adequately prepared to command a division. Law's inexperience as a division commander became evident, even prior to Chickamauga. After Gettysburg, Law took temporary command of Hood's Division, and his staff went with him. He understood the command and control requirements of a division required a robust staff to effectively lead it into battle. However, Law did not adequately augment his staff to meet those requirements. Apparently, Law did not learn this lesson from his divisional command experience at Gettysburg.

Throughout both days of the battle, Law basically piecemealed the division until it was ineffective. Although each day began with Law organizing the division in manageable formations, the brigades mostly fought their battles isolated, unsupported, and without sufficient guidance from their division commander. On the first day of battle, after Sheffield's wounding, Law struggled to keep his old brigade together and function as a cohesive unit. Perry's 44th Alabama Regiment separated itself from the brigade's main battle lines and essentially fought autonomously the remainder of the day. Though Law placed Oates in command of the remainder of the Alabama Brigade, his focus was to gather in Perry's regiment and get Perry to take command of the brigade. He lost his battlefield awareness and the cohesion of the division, directing most of his efforts in assisting the Alabamians instead of leading the division.

Law provided minimal leadership and guidance to Benning and Robertson, permitting those commanders to fight their engagements independently. When Robertson asked for a change in front, Law did not question him, and gave immediate approval. Again, when Robertson requested additional support, he sent Benning. Law never attempted to organize the division for a coordinated attack. Nor did Law attempt to rally the Texans or Georgians when their lines began to crumble.

Again, on 20 September, Law competently organized the division for the advance. Nonetheless, when the hostilities began that day, Law, once again, piecemealed his brigades. Once more, his efforts focused on his old brigade. His decision to place the Alabamians in the lead battle line of the division was an indication that he had little faith in Perry's abilities and complete confidence in Robertson and Benning. However, the results were more crippling than the previous day. Again, the Alabama Brigade fought

piecemealed. The 44th Alabama separated and fought, like the previous day, independent from its parent brigade. In addition, the 15th Alabama Regiment, under the self-absorbed Colonel Oates' command, fought independently across Longstreet's entire right wing, not returning to the brigade until the close of the battle. The remaining Alabama regiments, and likewise, Robertson's and Benning's brigades, fought their own separate engagements without support or coordination of other Confederate brigades. Law's actions clearly point out his inexperience as a division commander, and how they affected his performance, and that of Hood's Division.

A fair analysis of Colonel James Sheffield is not appropriate in this context. Unfortunately, Sheffield was wounded early in the battle and unable to contribute his leadership to the Alabama Brigade at Chickamauga. However, I do question his decision to not take a staff with him to command the brigade. When Sheffield was wounded at the commencement of hostilities on 19 September, the command and control of the brigade went with him. The brigade's ability to operate as a cohesive unit disintegrated. Sheffield had sufficient time to identify a staff, while in Virginia, in the event that Law would command the division, which was expected in light of Hood's recovery from Gettysburg. He chose not to. Evidently, Sheffield did not learn this valuable lesson at Gettysburg, when Law assumed command of the division, and he assumed command of the Alabama Brigade, when Hood was wounded at the battle on 2 July 1863.

Throughout the Civil War, Brigadier General Henry L. Benning exhibited the foundation of a good leader. When not in combat, he was a persistent and resourceful leader. Benning's background as a judicial official served him well in command of troops; his character and integrity was never in question. As the commander of military

troops, his concern for their safety and well-being was always foremost in his mind. He understood the importance of training, and was constantly preparing his brigade for combat. In general, Benning's disposition was calm and professional during these sessions, and his steadfastness earned him the nickname "Old Rock" from his troops. However, in battle, Benning's demeanor changed. He became excitable, and his actions tended to be reckless and tentative rather than aggressive and deliberate. Benning's tactical and technical expertise consistently evaded him, and his actions at Chickamauga provided evidence of this.

Near the Viniard Field on 19 September, Benning advanced the Georgia Brigade without dispatching skirmishers to his front, or security to his flanks, and charged straight into the battle without making the prudent assessment of the situation. Though his actions were hastily coordinated with Robertson, to whom he was in support, the results were devastating. Benning lost many good men and officers, due to his actions, failing to adequately understand the enemy's disposition. On 20 September, Benning's fight was even shorter. In support of Perry's Alabamians, Benning again, sent his troops into battle without prudently understanding the enemy's disposition. His actions were strictly reactive. Rather than dispatching a smaller, sufficient force to confront the threat, Benning committed his entire brigade. He did not allow himself ample time to assess the situation, and the results of his actions were the same as they were the previous day. Even a hasty assessment of the situation would have allowed Benning the opportunity to determine a plan of action and fight a coordinated engagement. Unfortunately for his troops, Benning became excitable and lost the integrity of his brigade. Its cohesion had dissipated. It was only after Longstreet's words of reassurance did calm come to Benning

and permit him to find focus. However, Benning's poor leadership in battle that day had taken its toll on his brigade and its offensive will would not return again at Chickamauga.

Brigadier General Jerome B. Robertson, like Benning, displayed concern for his troops, and they often appreciated his sincerity. "Aunt Polly" was the nickname given to him by his Texans.⁴ However, more often than not, soldiers are soldiers, taking advantage of their leaders' weaknesses when given the opportunity. One limitation of Robertson's was his failure to mandate discipline within the brigade, and his troops exploited this fault. Robertson often coddled his commanders and troops, attempting to win their loyalty by providing them goods and services rather than leadership. This was apparent in Wilmington, North Carolina, during their rail journey to the battlefield, when the intoxicated troops became unruly and caused havoc among the Wilmington townsfolk and local authorities. They were reckless and disrespectful, and Robertson allowed it to happen.

One instance of Robertson's performance does lead some credence to his abilities. On 19 September, when Robertson confronted the enemy to his left flank, he dispatched the 3rd Arkansas Regiment to establish contact and develop the situation. This decision provided time for Robertson to assess the events unfolding and formulate a plan of action. He was correct to report and coordinate with Law, and request a change of front, knowing that his right flank was unsupported. However, he falsely assumed Law would send immediate support to protect it. Unfortunately, Law did not, and rather than waiting for support, Robertson pushed his brigade forward with reckless abandon. The results of his actions severely depleted the ranks of the Texas Brigade. Robertson's lack of discipline exposed itself in battle.

Similarly on 20 September, Robertson's impatience was repeated. Again, the Texas Brigade advanced without a coordinated effort from Robertson. The Texas Brigade's overly aggressive and unsupported attack rendered similar results as the previous day. Robertson's Brigade ended its day defensively postured in woods in the east Dyer Field. Their day, like that of Benning's troops, was short. Robertson's performance at Chickamauga was second-rate, and not his best.

When compared to other Confederate divisions, the overall performance of Hood's Division at the Battle of Chickamauga was passable. However, its leaders did not sufficiently influence and direct their soldiers in a coordinated manner to be successful. Their inability to fight cohesively directly impacted the effectiveness of its units. If the division's leaders applied the basic fundamentals of leadership, an improved performance and positive outcome would have been realized. Of course, this result is purely speculative, but an informed study of this and other Civil War campaigns influenced my conclusions.

This analysis of Hood's Division raises issues for further study. Its focus was on the leadership dynamics within the division, and did not adequately address the technologies, tactics, and human factors that were present within the division. Further studies of the individual brigades, independent of one another, will bring into context, a more definitive perspective, and provide additional insights for today's students of the military science.

This study of Hood's Division demonstrated the importance of basic leadership fundamentals, to include the importance of effective communication, decisionmaking, and direction. Also of importance, are the tactical and technical skills leaders must

possess to necessitate planning and execution of missions. The dynamics leadership brings to a battlefield are timeless throughout history. A leader's character, integrity, and confidence in his or her abilities, directly influences the performance of their unit. Though leadership is difficult to quantify, it can only be determined by a thorough study of units and their leaders. This particular essay provides one example as to why it is relevant for modern professional officers to study commanders and units from our military past.

¹ U.S. Army FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, (Washington D.C.:Department of the Army, August 1999), 1-4 – 1-7.

²Hood, 65-66.

³Laine & Penny, 341.

⁴Warner, 261.

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